

For the love of flowers

ZAHANGIR SHAH, Manikganj

Engineer Khan Mohammad Aftab Uddin's love for flowers has flourished into a profitable business venture in Manikganj.

Aftab Uddin, chairman of Spectra Group, started Spectra Garden on 16 bighas of land at Dhutrabari village, near Paturia ferry terminal, of Shivalaya upazila in Manikganj in July 2012.

More than 50 kinds of flowers are grown on the land, including garbera, gela deulux, tuberose, rose, china rose, Irani rose, local rose varieties, hybrids of China rose, afarbia, ediniam, chhoto patar rongon, boro patar rongon, China white flower, gandharaj, evening jasmine, noyon tara, hasnahena, marigold, botam-ful, wood rose, jasmine, jui, madhobilata and dopati. There are also more than 20 types of fruit trees including mango, lichee, malta, shafira, pomegranate, orange, papaya, guava, grapes, coconut, lemon, Thai lemon, cashew nut, pistachios and cloves.

Alongside those who come to buy flowers and fruits here, the garden attracts a huge number of local visitors every day.

The man-in-charge of the garden Amiruzzaman Choudhury said he buys saplings from different areas of the country and from India for the garden.

There are 10,000 garbera plants on

two flower beds in the garden. The saplings were bought from India at Tk 225 each. Five thousand saplings were planted two years ago and another 5,000 added this year.

There are eleven types of garberas here of different colours. The origin of these flowers is the Netherlands.

Two thousand garberas are sent to Dhaka by bus for sale at a time. A total of 8,000 garberas are sold a week from this garden. The average income from this garden is around Tk 2,56,000 a month from the sale of around 32,000 garberas.

These flowers are sold at varying prices from Tk 8 to 10 per piece during winter while the price may fall to as low as Tk 2 per piece in Ramadan.

The bulk sale of other varieties of flowers hasn't begun yet from the garden.

Flower seller Fazlu Chowdhury of Shahbagh in the capital said he buys garberas from the garden in Manikganj.

Alongside the manager, there are eight full-time employees in the garden. They cultivate, nurse, pluck and pack flowers.

Although the garden began its journey out of the simple aspect of a man's love for flowers, Spectra Garden is now a full-blown business venture and has created jobs for locals, Amiruzzaman said.



Spectra Garden at Dhutrabari village in Manikganj's Shivalaya upazila. More than 50 kinds of flowers are grown here for sale. Inset, a man holding Garbera flowers. The photos were taken recently.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN



Dhaka protests Islamabad's remarks

FROM PAGE 1

Executive Council Member of the Jamaat-e-Islami, has been executed in Bangladesh," according to a press statement of Turkey's foreign ministry.

"We stress once again that the wounds of the past cannot be healed with these methods and hope that this wrong practice will not lead to separation among the brotherly people of Bangladesh," the statement added.

By openly siding with the Bangladesh nationals convicted of crimes against humanity and genocide, Pakistan once again acknowledged its direct involvement and complicity in the mass atrocities committed during Bangladesh's Liberation War in 1971, said a foreign ministry press release.

"Pakistan statement is completely direct interfere in Bangladesh's internal affairs," said Additional Foreign Secretary Kamrul Ahsan, who summoned Samina Mehtab, the acting Pakistani high commissioner.

After the 20-minute meeting from 3:15pm, Kamrul told reporters that the Pakistani envoy was informed that Pakistan has no scope to make any comments on the trial of war criminals in Bangladesh as it was "open, transparent and there was scope for appeal. And Mir Quasem availed the opportunity of appeal before the highest court".

The Pakistan foreign ministry in a statement after the execution on Saturday night, said Mir Quasem Ali was executed "for the alleged crimes committed before December, 1971, through a flawed judicial process".

"Ever since the beginning of the trials, several international organisations, human rights groups, and international legal figures have raised objections to the court proceedings, especially regarding fairness and transparency, as well as harassment of lawyers and witnesses representing the accused," it said.

Pakistan further said Bangladesh should uphold its commitment, as per the Tripartite Agreement of 1974, wherein it "decided not to

proceed with the trials as an act of clemency. Recriminations for political gains are counter productive. Pakistan believes that matters should be addressed with a forward looking approach in the noble spirit of reconciliation".

Pakistan had earlier issued similar statements and adopted resolution in national parliament and provincial assembly after the execution of war criminals to which Bangladesh had reacted by summoning its high commissioner to the foreign office.

The government of Bangladesh strongly rejects Pakistan's claim that these are "recriminations for political gains". In fact, Mir Quasem was tried for specific crimes he committed during the War of Liberation of Bangladesh, the note said.

It was further stated that the trials took solely into consideration the crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide in Bangladesh committed by Mir Quasem during 1971 and was not at all based on his political identity or affiliation.

The International Crimes Tribunal

sentenced Mir Quasem Ali to death for planning, instigating and executing genocide, murder, and torture among other crimes in Chittagong during the Liberation War.

On the tripartite agreement, the foreign ministry note stated that in no way the 1974 Agreement had given clemency to the Bangladeshi war criminals, including the members of Razakar, Al-Badr, and Al-Shams.

Even after the 1974 agreement and until the end of 1975, a large number of Bangladeshi war criminals were in different jails of Bangladesh facing trials, and Pakistan had never expressed its concerns by relating those trials with the 1974 agreement, the note said.

The Pakistani diplomat was reminded that Pakistan continues to present a misleading, limited and partial interpretation of the underlying premise of the 1974 agreement, which is unacceptable to Bangladesh.

The essential spirit of the agreement was to create an environment

of good neighbourliness and peaceful co-existence and for ushering in long-term stability and shared prosperity in the region.

The "clemency" mentioned in the agreement never implied that the masterminds and perpetrators of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide would continue to enjoy impunity and eschew the course of justice. The tripartite agreement in no way restricted Bangladesh from prosecuting its own nationals for war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity.

The scope of the 1974 agreement was limited to repatriation of 195 Pakistani war criminals and remaining Pakistani prisoners of war, and the return of the Bangladeshis stranded inside Pakistan, the note said.

By opposing the tribunal verdicts and the executions, it said Pakistan has blatantly dishonoured the sentiment of the people of Bangladesh and the spirit of the Liberation War of 1971, which are the basic premise of Bangladesh's nationhood.

Given the state of the judiciary in

Pakistan, the note said it did not have the moral right even to assess the independent judiciary of another country let alone making biased, flawed and unfounded comments.

Meanwhile, the ruling Awami League also protested Pakistan's undue reaction and it "shameful".

After a meeting at the party president's Dhanmondi office, AL Joint General Secretary Dipu Moni said Pakistan's reaction about Quasem's execution is very natural. "Earlier, the country had made such reaction over other war criminals' execution," said the former Foreign Minister.

"Through Pakistan's reaction it has been proved that those war criminals conducted war crime and fought against Bangladeshi innocent people taking the side of the Pakistani occupation forces," Dipu said.

AL Agriculture & Co-Operative Affairs Secretary Abdur Razzak said Pakistan considers the war criminals its own people and thus the country is reacting for its own people.

Quasem buried in Manikganj

STAR REPORT

Executed war criminal Mir Quasem Ali was buried at his Chala village in Manikganj's Harirampur early yesterday.

Quasem, chief of notorious Al-Badr Bahini in Chittagong in 1971, was hanged at Kashimpur Central Jail-2 at 10:30pm Saturday for committing crimes against humanity during the Liberation War.

Later, his body was taken to Manikganj under police protection, and Quasem's wife Khanadkar Ayesha Khatun received the body around 2:45am, said Shajahan Sheikh, assistant superintendent of police of Manikganj Special Branch.

Quasem's two daughters and around 40 relatives were present at that time, he said.

He was buried after a namaz-e-janaza at his ancestral village around 3:30am, said our Manikganj correspondent, quoting Abdus Salam, a sub-inspector of Special Branch of Manikganj police.

Additional police were deployed in the village and its adjacent areas.

Police did not allow people, including journalists, to enter the area. They also set up check posts on roads and link roads to beef up security in the area.

Meanwhile, Jamaat-e-Islami, within half an hour of the execution, called an eight-hour hartal from 6:00am today, protesting what they said was the "killing of Quasem".

On the other hand, different organisations, including Workers Party of Bangladesh and Bangladesh Jubo Moitri, expressed satisfaction with the execution of the 63-year-old Jamaat leader.

They also demanded the banning of Jamaat for its anti-liberation role and the confiscation of the convicted war criminals' properties.

A staff correspondent from Chittagong adds, Jamaat could not hold the gayebana janaza of Quasem in Chittagong College's Parade Ground in the port city yesterday.

Soon after the execution of Quasem on Saturday night, Jamaat made an announcement of holding the janaza there. Chittagong College

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A retired army major

FROM PAGE 1

Transnational Crime unit, at a briefing yesterday said that according to information they have, the dead was Jahidul Islam of Comilla.

Jahid severed all communications with family members and relatives in April and got engaged in so-called jihad, said the official.

On Friday, Monirul said that Murad alias Jahangir Alam alias Omar was a retired army man. However, the official could not say which post the man held in the military.

Contacted, Comilla Superintendent of Police Shah Abidur Rahman said Jahid was from West Chandpur of Panchthubi in Comilla Sadar. His father Mohammad Nurul Islam is a retired police inspector.

The SP added that based on detectives' information, they have become sure that Jahidul was a retired army major.

However, he said, they will contact the army headquarters to verify it further, reports a correspondent from Comilla.

Jahid last visited his village home around eight months ago. He was little

known to locals at West Chandpur as he rarely visited there and rarely socialised with people.

Jahid, 37, is the eldest among his two brothers and a sister.

Neighbours said only his parents lived in their West Chandpur home — on the first floor of their three-storey building.

During a visit to the house, none of the family members was found. A tenant said Nurul left for Dhaka on Friday for treatment.

According to his three acquaintances in Dhaka, Jahid got commissioned in 2000 after training under Bangladesh Military Academy's 43 Long Course.

The army authorities sent him to Canada for a course (2013-2014) at the junior staff college of Canadian armed forces, said the acquaintances.

On return from Canada in 2014, Jahid looked interested in religious activities and started telling his friends that he would quit the army as "many things in the service contradict his ethics and religious beliefs", they added.

NYPD arrests suspect

FROM PAGE 16

60-year-old Nazma's husband found her bleeding on a sidewalk near their home on August 31, reports Daily News New York.

Meanwhile, Nazma was buried yesterday in a local graveyard at her ancestral home in Shariatpur following a namaz-e-janaza where hundreds gathered to pay tribute. Her corpse had reached Bangladesh earlier in the morning, reports a correspondent.

Earlier on Friday, ahead of her planned burial in Bangladesh, a funeral service was held for the deceased at Jamaica Muslim Center.

NYPD said the suspected killer has admitted to have stabbed the woman after she refused to hand over her money while she was walking along Normal Road near 160th Street, according to Daily News New York.

He faces a second-degree murder charge, in addition to robbery and criminal possession of a weapon but he has no criminal history in New York, Daily News New York quoted police as saying.

The suspect lived on the road where the incident took place, about two blocks

south of the victim's home on 161st Street.

Nazma and her 75-year-old husband, Shamsul Alam Khan, were walking home after closing their Jamaica Avenue souvenir shop for the evening. Shamsul, who suffers from asthma, stopped to catch his breath and let his wife go on without him.

Galvez-Marin confronted and stabbed Nazma at around 9:15pm, after she got ahead of her husband. Shamsul heard his wife screaming for help and minutes later he found her fatally wounded on the sidewalk.

Nazma was sent to a hospital where she died later.

Nazma's family members decried the killing as a hate crime since no personal possessions were taken from her and she was wearing traditional Muslim attire during the fatal assault. However, police did not categorise the attack as such, according to PIX11 News.

Only several weeks earlier, on August 13, a Bangladeshi imam, Alauddin Akonjee, 55, and his assistant, Tara Uddin, 64, were gunned down in the same city.

Who runs these pvt universities?

FROM PAGE 1

The law does not cover the appointments of acting VC, pro-VC and treasurer.

However, UGC officials say, the universities are allowed to be run by acting VCs only when the VC's tenure expires. On expiry of the VC's tenure, a university makes a teacher acting VC for an interim period until the next VC is appointed.

Getting the chancellor's approval through the education ministry for the appointment of a VC should not take more than a month, said an UGC official, wishing not to be named.

But since the law does not stipulate any specific time limit, some universities take advantage of it and keep the acting VCs in their posts for a longer period of time, while others simply do not follow any rules, added the official.

Educationists and private university teachers said the board of trustees, in many cases, is reluctant to appoint vice-chancellor and pro-vice-chancellor to make sure it has control over the university administration.

This has been going on for too long with the education ministry and the UGC allegedly showing indifference. Experts said it is harmful both for the students and the universities.

The latest UGC report shows the situation has worsened over the last two years.

In a 2014 report, the UGC, the statutory apex body for higher education, stated that 20 private universities out of 79 did not have VCs while the posts of pro-VC and treasurer were vacant at 61 and 49 institutions respectively.

According to the latest report, only American International University Bangladesh, University of Development Alternative, Eastern University, Metropolitan University and United International University have all three posts filled.

Since the beginning of the journey in 1992, private universities have been playing a significant role in accommodating a large number of

students pursuing higher education.

Around 4.63 lakh students are now studying at 84 universities and they account for 65 percent of the campus-based students in Bangladesh.

Eight more private universities have got approval from the UGC recently, but they are yet to start academic activities.

There are allegations that many of those have not met conditions set out in the law.

Requesting anonymity, the vice-chancellor of a private university said, "This is not a normal situation. If the leader of an institution is not a full-time staff, it would obviously disrupt its normal functioning."

Universities without full-time VCs face problems in decision-making and development activities, he told The Daily Star.

The VC also said there is a scarcity of competent professionals who can take up top leadership roles at universities.

"In many cases, the board of trustees doesn't find candidates who would be loyal to them," he added.

Although the board members are supposed to give strategic directives, they often get involved in day-to-day activities of the universities and perform duties that are supposed to be carried out by the VCs and pro-VCs, the VC went on saying.

Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid also acknowledged the problems facing private universities.

"We are putting pressure on them and at the same time, we are trying to persuade them to fulfil the conditions," Nahid told The Daily Star yesterday.

"We don't want to be hostile to them because we need to develop this sector further as it has huge potentials. So our approach is persuasive so that this problem can be resolved," he added.

Noted educationist Prof Syed Manzoarul Islam said that in most cases, politically or financially influential people were granted approval for setting up private universities. They were given permission mostly

on political grounds.

"Therefore, they cannot be touched," he said.

About the government's role, he said since the government granted permission, it must take the responsibility for overseeing whether the universities were run properly.

The UGC has not been empowered enough to deal with the matter. It does not have adequate manpower to monitor the universities as well, added Manzoarul.

He stressed the need for forming the much-awaited Higher Education Commission with a strong mandate so that it can take action against any rule breakers.

"We can't compromise on education as it is linked with our future," he said.

Sheikh Kabir Hossain, president of Private University Association of Bangladesh, said getting competent people for the three posts has become difficult.

"As the universities cannot find capable aspirants, they do not follow due recruitment process," he told The Daily Star.

"In fact, I have been looking for a competent and qualified candidate for the post of treasurer in my university for quite a long time, but I am yet to find one," said Kabir, also chairman of the board of trustees of Fareast International University.

Asked about the practice of running universities with acting VCs, he did not give a clear answer.

He, however, refuted the allegation that private universities want to have people of their choice in the top posts.

Terming the situation unwarranted, UGC Chairman Prof Abdul Mannan said it is the duty of the respective universities to ensure appointments of VC, pro-VC and treasurer as per law.

The commission has nothing to do with the matter as the Private University Act-2010 allows only the chancellor to appoint a VC for a four-year term from a panel of candidates recommended by the trustee board, he added.