

MARKING JANUARY 5 BNP may settle for Nayapaltan as rally venue

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
The BNP would like to hold today's rally marking its "democracy killing day" in front of its Nayapaltan office if the authorities did not grant it permission to hold it at Suhrawardy Udyan. "We are prepared to hold the rally in front of our party's central office, if we are denied permission [to hold the rally] at Suhrawardy Udyan," Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir said at a preparatory meeting ahead of the rally at Bhasani Bhaban yesterday. The party is awaiting the authorities' permission for holding the rally today at Suhrawardy Udyan to protest the January 5, 2014 general elections. Fakhru, however, said he hoped the government would make a gesture of goodwill by granting the permission to BNP for holding the rally at Suhrawardy Udyan.

The Awami League is afraid of the people and they do not believe in democracy. That is why they deprive the opposition parties of their rights to hold rallies and processions, Fakhru said.

He also urged the government to keep "windows of democracy" open
SEE PAGE 11 COL 4



Rhidi, five and a half years old, holds the photo of her missing father Pervez Hossain at a human chain in front of the National Museum in the capital yesterday. She is deprived of her father's affection since December 2013. The National Committee against Fascism and Imperialism organised the programme, demanding the government identify and try those who "ordered kidnapping and killing of people in crossfire". About 50 families of the victims of enforced disappearance joined the programme.
PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

'Torture of youth at police station' to be probed

A CORRESPONDENT, Jessore
Police yesterday formed a committee to investigate the alleged torture of a youth at Jessore Kotwali Model Police Station after different media outlets published a photograph and reports on the incident.

Shahid Mohammad Abu Sarwar, additional superintendent of Jessore police, will lead the two-member probe body. However, Abu Sayeed, who was allegedly tortured, and his relatives at Jessore Press Club yesterday told journalists that "police did not torture him". The photograph published in the media was not his, Sayeed claimed.

Locals alleged that Sayeed is involved in drug peddling. His father said some plainclothes policemen picked up his son from near his house in Talbaria village of Jessore on Wednesday.

On the following day, one of his relatives told journalists that two policemen of Jessore Kotwali Model Police Station demanded Tk 2 lakh from Sayeed, but he refused to give them the money. The policemen then picked him up and beat him at the police station.

Police freed Sayeed after taking Tk 50,000 as bribe from his family,
SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

Marzan killed in 'shootout'

FROM PAGE 1
Crime (CTTC) unit Chief Monirul Islam told The Daily Star yesterday.

Bangladeshi-Canadian Tamim was killed in a police raid in Narayanganj on August 27 last year.

Marzan along with more than a dozen other militant leaders grabbed the attention of law enforcers after the café attack, which left 22 people, mostly foreigners, dead on July 1 last year.

"Many of them [the militants] have already been killed. We are still looking for three to four other top leaders of the group," Monirul added.

Earlier on December 25 last year, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal said sacked army major Syed Ziaul Haque and Marzan were under surveillance and would be arrested anytime soon.

Zia is the military wing chief of terror outfit Ansar al Islam, which is involved in targeted killing of free-thinkers, writers, bloggers and LGBT activists.

About Marzan, officials had earlier said the Gulshan café attackers were sending him pictures and situation

reports from inside the restaurant during the siege on July 1.

He later sent those pictures and reports to Tamim.

Rita Katz, director of SITE Intelligence Group, posted five pictures of the attackers on July 2 from her twitter account, saying that the images were released by Islamic State.

"Neo JMB", as called by law enforcers, is an offshoot of the banned outfit Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) and it follows the ideologies and strategy of IS.

Police released Marzan's photo on August 12 last year.

SADDAM WAS PICKED UP 9 MONTHS AGO?

Mizanur Rahman, elder brother of Saddam, told The Daily Star that they identified him from some photographs of the body they got from some journalists who came to their house yesterday afternoon.

On April 14 last year, some uniformed and plainclothes policemen picked up Saddam from his in-laws' house in Sundarganj upazila of Gaibandha, Mizanur claimed.

"His wife Farzana and in-laws

informed us about the incident," he said, adding they went to Sundarganj Police Station but police denied picking him up.

Saddam's in-laws tried to file a general diary with the police station but officials there refused to record it, he also said.

"As we were in panic, we tried to file a general diary with Rajarhat Police Station [in Kurigram] through a mediator but failed."

The family members had almost no communications with Saddam since he married Farzana in December 2014 without their consent. He was then a first-year history student at a college in Lalmonirhat.

Saddam used to live with his in-laws in Gaibandha and look after a poultry farm there. After his marriage, he visited his family once or twice -- the last was possibly in February 2015.

Saddam, who passed Dakhil and Alim [equivalent to SSC and HSC] from a madrasa in Rajarhat, didn't have beard before he was picked up. But, in the photo, he has beard, Mizanur said.

He added that they would bury the body if the government allows.

THE 'SHOOTOUT'

Mohibul Islam Khan, deputy commissioner of CTTC unit, said law enforcers set up a checkpoint Thursday night in front of Rayerbazar Martyred Intellectuals Memorial on Beribadh in Mohammadpur following information that Marzan would pass through the area.

"As two persons on a motorbike were going through the area around 3:00am yesterday, policemen on duty at the checkpoint challenged them. A gunfight ensued as the two while trying to escape hurled two to three grenades targeting our officials."

During the "gunfight", the two youths fell from the bike being hit with bullets. They were taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH), where doctors declared them dead, Mohibul said.

At the DMCH, the CTTC officials became confirmed about the identities of the two from photographs.

Police recovered a pistol, three bullets and a knife from the spot.

Asked where Marzan had been

hiding since police launched a hunt for him, Mohibul said they are investigating it.

The bodies have been kept at Dhaka Medical College morgue for autopsy, said Bachchu Mia, sub-inspector at the DMCH Police Outpost.

Visiting the spot yesterday morning, this correspondent saw blood on the ground.

Shahida Begum, a middle-aged woman who runs a tea stall in front of the memorial, said around midnight she heard from her house a couple of explosions. The house is just beside the shop.

Nargis Begum, who lives in a nearby slum, said that from her home, she had heard several gunshots.

Meanwhile, the home minister told reporters at his residence that

Saddam was involved in all the targeted killings in North Bengal and he coordinated the militants in the region while Marzan was an upper-tier leader.

"We were looking for Marzan and Saddam," he said.

Marzan was the most wanted militant after other top militants got killed or arrested, the minister added.

"We believe that they [militants] will now become largely inactive as Marzan and Saddam have died," he said.

Marzan's father Nizam Uddin said they would not apply for getting the body for burial but would receive it if the authorities hand it over to them.

"My son got involved in militant activities and now he got his punishment," he told our Pabna correspondent.

"I have nine more children. I have no eagerness for his body for the sake of security of other family members," he added.

Family members and villagers demanded punishment of those responsible for the spread of militancy in the country.

"Nobody supports Marzan's militant activities. His death in shootout is not a surprise. The masterminds should also be hunted down," said Emdadul Islam, an elderly neighbour of the family.

Chinese FM makes brief stopover at Dhaka airport

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi had a brief stopover at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in the city early today.

A diplomat of the Chinese embassy in Dhaka confirmed this.

"Yes, technical flight stop," the diplomat said without giving details. Foreign Secretary Md Shahidul Haque met the Chinese minister at the airport.

Wang was on his way to official visits to Madagascar, Zambia, Tanzania, Republic of Congo and Nigeria from January 7 to 12, Chinese media quoted its foreign ministry spokesperson Geng Shuang as saying.

Tigers wilt in T20Is too

FROM PAGE 1
the Bay Oval on Friday -- means the visitors are now 2-0 down in the three-match T20 series and face another white-wash come next Sunday after their 3-0 submission in the ODI series a week ago.

The opening episode was a mirror image of the first T20I at McLean Park, where both sides lost early wickets. The difference once again was one of the Black Caps batsmen carried his bat till the end while the visitors faltered in that crucial aspect once again.

New Zealand opener Colin Munro hit a blazing century in his side's impressive score of 195 for seven. The left-hander plundered 101 off 54 balls, hitting everything thrown at him by the Tigers' bowlers on way to his maiden hundred. He struck seven sixes and as many fours and he was particularly savage against off-spinner Mahmudullah, who conceded 28 runs in one over -- the 13th of the innings. This the most productive over

after the previous one bowled by Shakib, who went for 15 runs. And these two overs completely changed the face of the game.

Munro, who became the fourth Kiwi batsman to score a T20I century, shared 100 runs off only 52 balls for the fifth wicket with Tom Bruce after they were reduced to 46 for three in 5.3 overs. Bruce also hit an impressive unbeaten 59 off 39 balls with four fours and a six.

The New Zealand score could easily have gone past the 200-mark had Rubel Hossain not bowled beautifully at the death. The right-arm pace bowler took three wickets and conceded just five runs in the last over. Munro only showed some respect to Mustafizur Rahman, who gave away 30 runs in his four overs without any success.

Bangladesh suffered a familiar top-

order collapse like the first game that they lost by six wickets. Imrul Kayes was out for a duck, sweeping left-arm spinner Mitchell Santner straight to Bruce in the deep. Tamim Iqbal was looking good for his seven-ball 13 before being run out while attempting a quick single off a misfield. Stranded in the middle after being refused by Sabbir Rahman, the experienced left-hander failed to regain his crease. Shakib Al Hasan played a lofted drive straight to the cover fielder after scoring one off two balls. Don't blame him, after all this is the way he plays.

Bangladesh at 36 for three desperately needed a big partnership like New Zealand did after being caught in a similar situation. Sabbir and Soumya Sarkar gave hope. The left-right pair was doing what Munro and Bruce did, hitting the ball all over the park with authority. It was pleasing to

see the pristine touches of Soumya and the arrogance of Sabbir. But at 104 for three in 10.3 overs when they were about to take the game away from the firm grip of the hosts, Soumya erred. He was caught at fine leg for a 30-ball 39 that contained three fours and two effortless sixes. Sabbir followed him soon after scoring a 32-ball 48. He offered a simple catch at long off while trying to smote leg-spinner Ish Sodhi with the wind. There was Mahmudullah's late show after Mosaddek Hossain was out to a brilliant diving catch by Santner at midwicket. Bangladesh's innings quickly folded for 148 in 18.1 overs.

And the pattern of Bangladesh's performance so far in batting, bowling or fielding is so consistent that one can be excused for not watching the next game at the same venue on Sunday.

Schoolboy beaten to death

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A ninth grader was beaten to death allegedly by some local boys in the city's Uttara yesterday evening.

The dead, Adnan Kabir, was aged 15. He was a member of a local teenage boys' group Nine Star, which was engaged in a rivalry with another local group Disco Boys.

Ali Hossain Khan, officer-in-charge of Uttara West Police Station, said Adnan of sector-12 went to sector-13 in Uttara in the afternoon to play badminton. At one stage, members of his rival group attacked him with hockey sticks.

Badly injured Adnan was rushed to a local hospital where doctors pronounced him dead.

The OC said the rival groups clashed near the Turag river last week. There might be a link between the clash and the killing of the schoolboy, he added.

Police were interrogating two detainees in this connection.

Binturong

FROM PAGE 16
Sreemangal on Tuesday.

Sopon Deb Sajal, director of Bangladesh Wildlife Service Foundation, told The Daily Star that the rescued binturong had been undergoing treatment there since Wednesday.

Veterinary Surgeon Ariful Islam told The Daily Star that the binturong's head and neck was hurt badly and that the treatment would require a month's time.

The animal would be released in Madhabpur forest in Moulvibazar after treatment, said Sopon.

Sharif Jamil, joint secretary of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon, said wildlife in locality indicates serious degradation of habitat. "We should think about the ecological health of different forests. There are many cases where wildlife was found in villages near forest."

NASIRNAGAR ATTACK Police seek 7-day remand for Ankhi

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

Police yesterday produced Haripur Union Parishad Chairman Dewan Atiqur Rahman Ankhi, allegedly an organiser of the October 30 hate attack on Hindus in Nasiragar, before a local court and sought his remand in custody for seven days.

Senior Judicial Magistrate Saraf Uddin of Brahmanbaria did not hear the remand prayer yesterday as it was a weekend. The court sent him to jail, said court police.

The hearing on the remand prayer will be held tomorrow.

Md Mahbubur Rahman, inspector at Brahmanbaria District Judge's Court, said police have sufficient evidence to substantiate the allegation of Ankhi's involvement in the Nasiragar attack. He hired trucks to gather
SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

Crackdown on, so are covert militant activities

FROM PAGE 1
embassy of that foreign country has been stepped up following the development.

Also recently, a small group of "highly" motivated Hizb-ut Tahrir men had secret meetings in Mohammadpur, according to officials of an intelligence agency.

"They held several meetings at two mosques in Mohammadpur after Maghrib prayers but their last meeting was inside the Mohammadi Housing complex," said one of the officials.

Investigators say the group was frequently changing meeting venues.

These are among the many findings that make law enforcers believe that radicals are very much active in the country despite the government's ongoing crackdown on militants.

Since the July 1 Gulshan attack, police have busted eight militant dens, leaving some 28 suspected militants killed. Firearms, bomb-making materials, improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and books on jihad were recovered there.

Still the radicals are operating secretly, using new platforms and techniques.

The non-violent Tablighi Jamaat is one such platform which militants -- affiliated with both al-Qaeda and Islamic State (IS) -- have started using to remain out of the law enforcers' radars, investigators say.

A day after police busted a militant den in Ashkona on December 24, ruling Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader said he believes the militants may strike again.

"After Gulshan incident, many have become complacent thinking that no such incident will happen further.... I have told you time and again that they [militants] seem to have been weakened but they could remain active secretly for a large-scale attack," he said at a programme in Dhanmondi.

Some police officials who have sufficient knowledge about the secret movements of the militants echoed his view.

"They [militants] are operating digitally and also holding secret

meetings, mostly in mosques where they discuss different targets to carry out attacks," said a senior counterterrorism official.

"They may be thinking of big targets to have global impact," added the official.

In the last two years, investigators arrested at least a dozen militants and foiled several plots by tracking mobile phones and social media networks, especially Facebook.

Tracking electronic communications, police foiled a plot of pro-al-Qaeda militants who planned to storm a building on Kemal Ataturk Avenue during New Year celebration. "Some foreigners live in the house," said a police officer of Gulshan zone.

A police team was deployed there after officials learnt about the plot.

Last week some radicals were found talking about a church in Gazipur in a secret online group discussion. Investigators are trying to learn about the group members and their activities.

Law enforcers intensified efforts to track radicalism online but they find the job difficult as militants

often use encrypted messaging apps.

Police believe the youths who recently went missing pose serious security threats as they might be working from hideouts.

A counterterrorism expert in Singapore, who studies the situations in Bangladesh, said Bangladeshi militants affiliated with IS and al-Qaeda are "very much" active in and outside the country.

"Some hardcore militants are yet to be nabbed. They are working with many other unknown militants," he told this correspondent, seeking anonymity.

He noted that involving children and women and using suicide vests in terror acts is a new and ominous development for Bangladesh.

Asked about the current capabilities of militant groups, Inspector General of Police AKM Shahidul Hoque said, "I should not say there is no threat."

"There is a low-level threat as there are some elements trying to be organised. Our intelligence is now strong enough to unearth and foil any plots."