



Rab personnel standing guard at a distance as a bomb disposal unit sweeps the burned down "militants den" at a remote char on the Padma in Chapainawabganj yesterday. A bomb detonates, inset.

PHOTO: RABIUL HASAN

## Three JMB operatives blow themselves up

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pistols were recovered from the spot. The Bomb Disposal Unit of Rab later swept the area and defused two bombs.

Rab has detained owner of the house Rafiqul Islam, his wife and her mother at Sabdipur in Godagari of Rajshahi.

Locals of the char said there were no structures within one and a half kilometres of the house that was built allegedly to rear cattle.

Mufti said two people claiming to be birdwatchers moved into the house around 15 days ago paying Tk 1,500 monthly rent.

A few days ago, two unidentified men were seen wandering in the area. When locals asked them about their identities,

they said they were NGO workers.

The Rab director further said their intelligence unit located the "militants den" following clues from a recently arrested militant suspect.

The suspect arrested in the case filed after the raid on a "militants den" at the capital's Darussalam in September said some of his cohorts were hiding in remote char areas, Rab said.

During that operation on September 4-8, Abdullah alias Meer Akrabul Karim, a suspected JMB leader, was killed along with his two wives, two children and two of his associates in massive explosions inside the Darussalam flat.

Rab claimed that Abdullah had

exploded "powerful" bombs and later recovered seven skulls from the flat.

After the operation yesterday, Mufti told reporters on the spot that their members cordoned off the house around 3:00am and asked the militants to surrender.

In response, the militants hurled some bombs and grenades at the Rab members who retaliated with gunfire.

After a 40-minute lull in the fighting, the militants again exploded a bomb.

"A massive explosion occurred inside the house around 5:00am. The blast put the entire house on fire," Mufti added.

Only some bamboo poles could be seen from around half a kilometre away.

Journalists were barred from proceeding further, reported our Chapainawabganj correspondent from the spot.

Six to seven buffalos were seen tied around 15 to 20 yards away from the house.

Mejbahul Haque, Alatoli Union Parishad member, said Rafiqul built the house around four years ago for farming and rearing cattle.

One of his sons used to go to the char in the morning and return home in the afternoon after taking care of the cattle, locals say.

The bodies of the three suspects were taken to Chapainawabganj Sadar Hospital last night.

## HOLDING TAX

# CCC puts hike plan on hold

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The Chittagong City Corporation on Monday postponed the holding-tax reassessment programme. The city dwellers, including leaders of different political parties, hailed the decision as they had long been demanding cancellation of the reassessment.

The development came a day after the LGRD and Cooperatives ministry's Local Government Division in a meeting decided to postpone the reassessment for city corporations across the country.

Secretary of the Local Government Division chaired the meeting held in the ministry on Sunday, said Shamsuddauha, chief executive officer of CCC, who represented the CCC in the meeting.

Shamsuddauha said the ministry postponed the reassessment as an automation programme regarding the holding tax collection started in city corporations.

"The pilot programme is going on in Dhaka north and south city corporations, and it will start soon in other city corporations," he said.

The reassessment will begin once the automation programme is complete. Until then, the tax will be collected as per the rate fixed previously, he added.

Chattogram Kordata Surokha Parishad, a group created to protect the taxpayers of Chittagong, launched a movement demanding cancellation of the reassessment after the CCC announced the reassessment in March last year to reassess the holding tax on homeowners.

The group held different programmes in the last one year. Stating that the amount of tax would increase manifold due to the reassessment, it called upon the city corpora-

tion to keep the tax rise at a tolerable level.

Praising the decision of postponing the reassessment, Amir Uddin, general secretary of the parishad, told The Daily Star that they were very happy with the decision.

"We are grateful to the people in the city to give us support and cooperate in our movement," he said, adding, "We are also thankful to the leaders of different political parties who gave support to our movement."

"We would like to thank the government for realising the people's sentiment," he said, adding, "We would bring out a victory procession in the city immediately."

Shahadat Hossain, president of Chittagong city unit BNP, hailed the decision.

He also demanded that the government cancel the reassessment programme of holding tax, considering the people's sufferings.

Ziauddin Ahmed Bablu, lawmaker of Jatiya Party from Chittagong-9 constituency, said he raised his voice against the reassessment in parliament and urged the ministry to keep the holding tax at a reasonable and tolerable level.

"The reassessment of holding tax is the decision of the ministry, not of the mayor and so only the ministry can change or postpone the decision," he said, adding, "So, I have called upon the ministry to withdraw the decision."

Contacted, Badiul Alam, joint general secretary of Chittagong city unit Awami League, lauded the postponement decision and said a quarter was trying to make the government and the mayor unpopular by increasing the holding tax manifold in the name of reassessment.

## Asif Nazrul granted bail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday granted anticipatory bail to Dhaka University Prof Asif Nazrul in two separate cases filed in Madaripur recently over a Facebook post.

One of the cases was lodged in connection with defaming Shipping Minister Shahjahan Khan through the Facebook post and another one under the much-talked about section 57 of the Information and Communication Technology Act.

The HC bench of Justice Md Miftah Uddin Choudhury and Justice Abu Taher Md Saifur Rahman gave bail to Asif Nazrul for 10 weeks in the defamation case and till submission of the police report in the case filed under the ICT act.

The judges came up with the order after hearing two separate petitions submitted by Asif Nazrul seeking anticipatory bail in the cases.

Deputy Attorney General Shaikh AKM Moniruzzaman Kabir told The Daily Star that the government would move an appeal before the Supreme Court's Appellate Division challenging the HC order of bail to Asif in the case filed under the ICT act.

Asif Nazrul yesterday appeared before the court for bail in the cases.

Advocate M Asaduzzaman argued for the accused.

## 'Outlaw' killed in 'shootout'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

An alleged member of an outlaw group was killed in what police claimed was a shootout. The incident took place between the police and his armed cohorts at Baninagar Khoghat area under Mizanpur Union of Rajbari Sadar Upazila in Rajbari around 3:30am yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Abbas Sorder, 48, of Kamarkhali village under Sujanagar Upazila in Pabna.

Office-in-Charge of Rajbari Sadar Police Tarik Kamal, said, "On secret information, police went to the area where a group of outlaws was in a meeting. Sensing the presence of the enforcers, they opened fire and police retaliated," he said.

Abbas was found after his cohorts fled the scene and was rushed to Rajbari General Hospital where an on-duty doctor declared him dead around 4:30am yesterday, he said.

He also claimed that police recovered a rifle, two bullets, a shotgun and three cartridges from the spot.

## Annisul Huq

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before being diagnosed with cerebral vasculitis.

Later, his condition improved and he was shifted to a regular bed.

## Participatory polls is the answer

Says Muhith about ways to stop election rigging

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Finance Minister AMA Muhith yesterday said participatory election is the only way of stopping polls rigging.

He also urged the opposition parties to avoid the politics of destruction and take part in the next election.

"I would like to tell the opposition parties to participate in the election as the government has already brought massive electoral reforms to ensure a free and fair election," he said while addressing the concluding session of Envoy's Conference at the Sonargaon Hotel.

He said muscle power is still an obstacle that could jeopardise free and fair polls. "But this hindrance can be removed only through a participatory election."

Muhith said despite his huge support, he lost the election in 2001 because of "rigging".

"After my defeat in the 2001 election, I met my party chief [Sheikh Hasina] and told her that I lost the election because it was rigged and expressed my desire to retire from politics."

Muhith said after hearing everything, Hasina requested him to help her prepare a fully-fledged report on the rigging, weakness of electoral laws and how the loopholes could be removed permanently.

The finance minister said he then talked to all party MPs and those contested but lost and prepared a 17-point recommendation, which the Election Commission has accepted and brought the necessary reforms to remove ways of polls rigging.

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## A pipe dream?

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again into Bangladesh in 1991-1992 fleeing fresh military violence in Myanmar, however, had to face difficulty to return to their homes due to introduction of the verification process in the 1992 deal.

Rohingyas who lost their citizenships due to a draconian law in 1982 were required to submit documents like Myanmar citizenship identity cards or other documents to pass scrutiny.

Refugee registration cards issued by Bangladesh government were, however, considered as documents in the verification process run by the UN refugee agency, UNHCR, that set up a sub-office to process the job.

In this process, around 200,000 Rohingya refugees were able to return. Yet, around 30,000 were left behind in Bangladesh as they were unable to present sufficient documentation.

But Myanmar has tightened the noose this time. According to the new agreement, Myanmar authorities, not UNHCR, will conduct the verification process and the Rohingyas will have to submit documents like copies of expired citizenship identity cards or national registration cards or other relevant documents to prove their past residency in Myanmar.

This is something many Rohingyas will find hard to do as whatever docu-

ments they had were either burned with their houses or destroyed in their flight through the monsoon rains.

Unlike 1992, refugee registration cards issued by the Bangladesh government will not be considered this time for their repatriation.

Moreover, separated family members and orphans left behind will require to be certified by a Bangladeshi court to be eligible for repatriation.

UNHCR will have a back seat in the process this time. Additionally, Myanmar authorities will also verify the refugee documents issued by UNHCR. In the end it will be Myanmar's discretion whether to take assistance of UNHCR.

The deal does not specify any timeframe for completion of the verification process. What Myanmar's Minister of Social Welfare and Resettlement, Win Myat Aye, said recently about the verification is more alarming. He said Myanmar government could verify 300 potential returnees a day. This means at that rate the process of verifying around 700,000 Rohingyas refugees since October last year will take years to complete.

There are more things for the Rohingyas to be concerned about. After the repatriation in 1978 and 1992, the Rohingyas were able to return to their homes. But this time, many of them will not be able to go

back as their houses were burned and razed.

According to the new agreement, they will be settled in temporary places at Dar Gyi Zar village, about 20 kilometers from Maungdaw near the Bangladesh border. It is one of the areas hit hard by the violence that began on August 25 that developed into a full-blown refugee and humanitarian crisis.

In the agreement, the Myanmar government, however, promised not to keep them at temporary holdings for long time. But the fate of more than one lakh Rohingya living in inhuman condition in the camps inside Myanmar after they were displaced in the violence of 2012 is testimony enough of the Myanmar government's hostile attitude towards the Rohingyas. International human rights organisations and leaders labelled the camps as modern day Nazi concentration camps.

The new agreement is only for the repatriation of those who entered Bangladesh after the violence in October last year and August this year. Rohingyas who crossed into Bangladesh earlier will be considered for repatriation after conclusion of the current agreement. This means they will have to wait for an indefinite period in the camps in Bangladesh.

Considering the above difficulties,

Dhaka did not agree in early October to Myanmar's proposal of following the criteria of the 1992 deal to take back the Rohingyas.

The reasons were clear as explained by Foreign Minister AH Mahmood Ali in a diplomatic briefing on October 9: the 1992 criteria is not "realistic" and the "situation of 1992 and current situation are entirely different."

Dhaka clarified its position a week after Myanmar Union Minister Kyaw Tint Swe during his visit to Dhaka proposed to follow the criteria of the 1992 deal.

But one and a half months down the line, Mahmood Ali agreed with Myanmar's proposal and signed an agreement during his recent visit to Naypyidaw.

This development came within a week after the Chinese foreign minister's visit to Dhaka and Naypyidaw. China has been protecting Myanmar from the international community's pressure and action and it is also backing a bilateral resolution of the crisis.

Signing the agreement made China's efforts successful and made it easy for Myanmar to buy more time to breathe and to ease international pressure on it. But for the Rohingyas, the coming days may appear more uncertain and the burden on Bangladesh will grow heavier.

## BB measures 'not enough'

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capability to run its financial operations.

He said the BB should liquidate the bank after compensating the depositors as the restructured board will not be able to win back depositors' confidence.

"Merger is also another option for the bank. But the central bank should recruit an external auditor to conduct an audit on the bank before going for merger or liquidation," Ahsan said.

A former governor of the central bank said the regulator took action against the errant bank very late.

"It would have been better for the bank and the depositors if the BB appointed an administrator for six months. Mere restructuring of the board will not work," said the former governor, wishing not to be named.

The Farmers Bank began operations in June 2013 with Tk 400 crore capital. However, irregularities resurfaced within a year.

Between September and November 2015, the BB conducted special inspections at three branches of the bank in the city's Gulshan, Motijheel and Shyampur, and found gross violations of banking rules in disbursing loans worth around Tk 400 crore.

The BB found some directors, including chairman Muhiuddin and Mahabubul, of the bank allegedly involved in sanctioning these loans,

violating the credit rules.

A former governor, a deputy governor and a former finance adviser said the BB could have appointed an administrator in the bank, adding that the regulator can oversee developments under the restructured board for a period of six months.

Ibrahim Khaled, former deputy governor, said the central bank could appoint an administrator for the bank in line with the Banking Company Act if its board and management failed to protect the interest of the depositors.

The central bank should appoint an administrator in the bank within six months if the restructured board and management fail to run the bank properly," he said.

AB Mirza Azizul Islam, former finance adviser to a caretaker government, also echoed the same saying that the central bank should appoint an administrator within six months if the new board fails to bring back credit discipline.

"The central bank should watch the bank round the clock so that the former directors cannot intervene in the bank's regular activities," said Dr Salehuddin Ahmed, a former governor.

He said legal action should be taken against the directors responsible for the financial scams.

Chronology of irregularities in the Farmers Bank:

The Farmers Bank has been mired in controversies even before the commencement of its banking operations in June 2013. The bank had allegedly recruited manpower before receiving its license from the central bank.

Then within one year of its operations, Md Mahabubul Haque Chisty