

# Murder case accused killed in 'gunfight'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Babu alias Palsar Babu, 35, the main accused in Awami League activist Abbas Mollah murder case, was killed during a "gunfight" with a Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) team in Jhikargachha of Jessore early yesterday.

Two Rab members, Mahbub, 45, and Hasan, 47, were injured in the encounter, Rab said.

Officer-in-Charge Abu Saleh Md Masud Karim of Jhikargachha Police Station said Babu was the main accused in the murder killing. He was also accused in several other cases.

Major Zia, commander, Jessore camp, Rab-6 said acting on a tip-off that a group of criminals had gathered for a meeting in Mirzapur village, a Rab team went to the area around 4:00am.

Sensing presence of the law enforcers, the gang fired at them triggering a "gunfight", Director Major Ziaur Rahman Zia said. A pistol, a magazine and a sharp weapon were recovered from the spot.

Abbas Mollah, 40, was killed in a bomb attack near Rostampur Government Primary School on January 3. The OC said Abbas was killed over a factional feud in the ruling Awami League. He was the brother of Kamal Hossain, general

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# Criminals hit college teacher with hammer

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Natore

Unidentified criminals hit a teacher in the head with a hammer in Natore yesterday morning, leaving him critically injured.

Fifty-year-old Lutfar Rahman, acting principal of Chandpur Technical College in Bagatipara, was first rushed to the upazila health complex. He was moved to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital later.

"Lutfar bore marks of serious marks in his head and left hand. So, we sent him to the other hospital for better treatment," said Nujhat Naurin, medical officer at the health complex.

His family members blamed a feud over the principal's post for the attack.

The victim's brother Rabiul Islam alleged that some criminals, hired by former principal of the college

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# 48,000 babies

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challenges accessing healthcare," said Rachael Cummings, the aid group's health advisor in Cox's Bazar.

"The camps have poor sanitation and are a breeding ground for diseases like diphtheria, measles and cholera, to which newborn babies are particularly vulnerable. This is no place for a child to be born.

"The disadvantage these newborn Rohingya babies will face, by virtue of the situation they are born into, is truly heartbreaking. From the very beginning they will battle odds stacked against them, living in an overcrowded environment where everyone is desperate for help."

Aid organisations like Save the Children are doing all they can, but the needs are simply enormous and they do not have enough resources and funding to ensure every mother and child receive the medical care they require, the report says.

"We urge the international community to step up and provide funding for this response so that vulnerable Rohingya children and families continue to receive the support they so desperately need," Rachael Cummings added.

# 7 killed

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died on their way to hospitals.

The injured, including three motorcyclists, were taken to various hospitals, including Feni Sadar Hospital. Four of them were in a critical condition, said Ashim Kumar Saha, residential surgeon at the hospital.

The deceased included the bus driver, Mohammad Hanif, 63, of Chittagong's Sandwip, and passenger Abul Kalam, 40, of Bhola. Abul Kalam Azad, officer-in-charge of Daganbhuiyan Police Station, said.

Identities of the other deceased could not be confirmed immediately.

# 2 stabbed

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They were rushed to Haluaghat Upazila Health Complex, where the doctors declared them dead, police said.

Injured Shunya, 20, is undergoing treatment at the health complex, said the OC.

Police are yet to identify the killers.



A burn victim recuperating at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH). A fire that broke out inside a bus carry 12 activists of Bangladesh Chhatra League, attributed to the bursting of balloons, injured around 12 passengers in the city's Farmgate.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

# US weighs Pak blowback as it piles pressure

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US President Donald Trump tweeted that Pakistan had rewarded past US aid with "nothing but lies & deceit."

The senior Trump administration official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said Washington hoped that the aid suspension would be enough to communicate its concern to Islamabad.

But the official cautioned that the freeze was also not the only tool that America had to pressure the country -- suggesting it might resort to other measures, if needed.

"We are considering many different things, not just the (financial) assistance issue," the official said.

"We are also looking at Pakistan's potential response ... and we are looking at ways to deal with that and to mitigate the risks to the relationship."

The official declined to detail what steps were under consideration, including whether that might include

possible unilateral US military action against militants in Pakistan.

But as Trump allow the US military to again ramp up its war effort in Afghanistan, including with the deployment of more US troops alongside Afghan forces, the official acknowledged a sense of urgency.

The United States has long blamed the militant safe havens in Pakistan for prolonging the war in Afghanistan, giving insurgents, including from the Haqqani network, a place to plot attacks and rebuild its forces.

"We believe we owe it to the Americans in harms' way in Afghanistan. We simply can't ignore the sanctuaries if we are going to make progress in Afghanistan," the official said.

**MATTIS PLAYS DOWN CONCERNS**

Mattis, speaking to reporters at the Pentagon, said he was not concerned about America's ability to use Pakistan

as a gateway to resupply US forces in Afghanistan.

"I'm not concerned, no," Mattis told reporters at the Pentagon, adding he had not gotten any indication from Pakistan that it might cut off those routes. Mattis travelled to Pakistan last month.

"We're still working with Pakistan and we would restore the aid if we see decisive movements against the terrorists -- who are as much a threat against Pakistan as they are to us."

The United States has also said some of the frozen aid could be released on a case-by-case basis, and none of it will be spent elsewhere -- leaving the door open to full reconciliation.

The Pakistani reaction has so far been limited to harsh rhetoric, with Pakistani Foreign Minister Khawaja Asif saying the United States was behaving towards Pakistan as "a friend who always betrays."

But opposition leader Imran Khan, a former cricket star tipped as the next Pakistani prime minister, said it was time for Pakistan to "delink" from the United States.

The senior Trump administration official who spoke on condition of anonymity acknowledged that a Pakistani cut-off would greatly complicate US resupply efforts in Afghanistan.

The official said the administration was developing "risk mitigation plans," but acknowledged that examination of a northern network of alternative routes used in the past was "still at a very broad level."

"If something were to happen to the ground lines of communication or air lines of communication through Pakistan, certainly that would be very difficult for the US and we would have to look for alternatives," the official said.

"And it would not be easy."

# BNP bid to stage protests foiled

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killing day".

Police on Friday foiled rallies and processions of the BNP and its associate bodies at different districts, including Khulna, Barisal and Chittagong. They also baton-charged BNP leaders and activists in Chittagong and Khulna.

On the other hand, the Awami League marked the day as "victory day for democracy" holding two rallies in Banani and on the Bangabandhu Avenue in addition to celebrations across the country.

In 2015, on the first anniversary of the January 5, 2014 election, violence erupted across the country stemming from rallies and counter rallies of both parties. The situation remained turbulent for several weeks.

That year, the BNP was not granted permission to hold a rally in front of its central office at Naya

Paltan. Police kept BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia confined to her Gulshan office by blocking the streets with sand-laden trucks.

Khaleda then called for a country-wide nonstop blockade from January 6 in an attempt to topple the government. The blockade went on until the last week of March.

At least 100 people were killed and around 1,500 injured in arson attacks on public vehicles during the blockade.

In its press release yesterday, the BNP claimed that at least 20 of its men were injured when police swooped on them while they were bringing out a protest processions in Shahbagh and Rampura areas yesterday.

The party also claimed 10 BNP men were arrested from Shahbagh -- the claim, however, was rejected by Officer-in-Charge of Shahbagh Police Station Abul Hasan.

The OC of Rampura Police Station, Proloy Kumar Saha, also denied allegations of baton charges on BNP processions.

Lambasting the 'police attack' on BNP men, party secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday said the government moved to wipe out BNP's existence from the country through repression.

"The government won't be able to stop the people's just movement despite arrest and torture of thousands of BNP leaders," he said in a statement.

Meanwhile, four rallies of BNP were obstructed yesterday as the local administration imposed section 144 in Akhanagar, Ruhia, Patiadangi and Dholarhat areas of Thakurgaon sadar upazila.

Upazila Nirbahi Officer Md Aslam Molla said they imposed section 144 in four areas since 10:00am, apprehending that the law

and order situation may go out of control in the areas.

Officer-in-charge of Sadar Police Station Abdul Latif Mia said police were deployed at four spots of rallies to avert any unwanted situation.

Mirza Fakhrul, who was scheduled to join the rallies, returned from the Shahjalal International Airport in the capital, cancelling the visit.

Meanwhile, BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Rizvi Ahmed at a press conference yesterday at the party's Naya Paltan central office said the year 2018 will be the year of the people getting their rights back under the leadership of BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia.

"The countdown to the end of the vote-less government has started," Rizvi said.

Rizvi said Awami League will no more be able to use force to deter the forward march of the people.

# New police unit to check cyber crime

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Presently, police search contentious items online manually. With OSINT, a search with the word "Bangladesh", for example, will bring up all social media posts or remarks about Bangladesh.

The search results can be narrowed down by changing words in the search string.

However, rights activists are worried about its misuse and warned that the software might be used for controlling social media users in the name of monitoring ahead of the elections.

"It will come in the way of logical discussions and curb freedom of expression," said Nur Khan Liton, a noted human rights activist.

People of different opinions and opposing political views may well be the primary victims, he cautioned.

"As there are instances of misuse of law in the country, there is a scope for misuse of the system by law enforcer. We have already seen that common people, journalists, human rights activists and politicians had to pay dearly because of the misuse of section 57 of the ICT law," he said.

The OSINT is a data mining tool, used for collecting data from publicly

available source, like research, newspaper, social sites and gather desired intelligence, said Sumon Ahmed Sabir, chief strategy officer of Fibre@Home, an international internet gateway firm.

"It has both positive and negative sides. It depends on the users to what end it will be used," he said, adding that many countries use the software to make policy decisions after analysing public discourse.

In a recent order, the home ministry said the cyber bureau was formed to effectively deal with the growing number of cyber and pornography-related crimes.

According to the police headquarters, around 1,417 cases were filed under the ICT act against 2,873 people in the last five years. Of them, 19 were filed in 2012, 48 in 2013, 149 in 2014, 303 in 2015, 546 in 2016 and 352 until June 30 of 2017.

As investigators lack the expertise in cyber crime, they often fail to produce evidence to prove a crime, resulting in the acquittal of accused in 65 percent cases, according to Nazrul Islam Shamim, public prosecutor at the Cyber Tribunal.

A dedicated police unit for investigating ICT cases may ensure punish-

ment in 75 to 80 percent cases, ultimately reducing the crime rate, he added.

Under the ICT Act, police, after investigation, either press charges or submit final report to the Cyber Tribunal, the lone tribunal to deal with these cases.

The tribunal received 763 charge sheets between July 30 last year and 2013, when the act was amended with provisions for harsher punishment, a tribunal source said.

Ninety percent of the cases were filed under section 57, the source said.

Of the 763 cases, 205 have so far been disposed of. Among the 205 cases, 84 were disposed of after trial while the rest were disposed of either after getting final reports or the plaintiffs withdrew the cases.

The PHQ sent a proposal to the home ministry for a 575-member specialised cyber bureau on March 30 last year.

Farooque Ahmed, assistant inspector general (organisation and management) of the PHQ recently said that the proposal was with the public administration ministry after the home ministry gave approval for a 505-member unit.

"We hope that the bureau will start operating within the next three to four months as it needs finance ministry's approval after clearance from the public administration ministry," he said.

The unit will investigate crimes like hacking of Facebook and twitter accounts, uploading nude pictures or videos on websites, hacking online bank accounts, using abusive words on the internet, comments hurting religious sentiments and other offences.

Saheli Ferdous, assistant inspector general of the PHQ, said in the past, they had no expert officials and had insufficient logistic supports to investigate cases under ICT act. The newly formed unit will be a great help, she said.

At the moment, the DMP's 70-member cyber security division is dedicated for cyber cases. The detective branch also investigates cyber-related incidents but on a small scale.

Around 246 cases were filed with 49 police stations of the DMP under the ICT and pornography act in 2017. The cyber security division was tasked with handling 76 of those cases. So far, it has completed investigation of 28.

# 12 BCL men hurt

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Babul Miah, assistant sub-inspector of Dhaka Medical College Hospital police outpost.

All the injured are mostly teens to young adults ranging from 14 to 21, according to burn unit sources.

"They suffered minor injuries. Around 1 to 6 percent of their body was burned," said Dr Partha Sankar Paul, resident surgeon, adding that the victims were kept in the observation ward and some of them might need admission.

Shakiluzzaman Bipul, BCL president of Uttara west unit, said there were two buses carrying at least 140 activists and some of them were carrying balloons.

"I was in the front bus and suddenly heard a loud bang from the second bus behind us," he said, claiming that at least 13 activists were injured in the blast, which might have been the result of a petrol bomb.

Different leaders of BCL have visited the victims and would bear the expenses of their treatment, Bipul added.

OC Mazharul said they would investigate the matter.

# BCL council

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He also hoped that the current committee would announce the date of the upcoming council as per the directives of the PM.

Many former and current leaders and activists of the BCL joined the programme, chaired by BCL President Saifur Rahman Sohag.

AL Joint General Secretary Jahangir Kabir Nanak, Organising Secretary Enamul Haq Shameem, AFM Bahauddin Nasim, among others, also spoke.

Later, BCL men brought out a massive procession in front of the Fine Arts Faculty of the DU. After parading several city streets, the procession ended in front of the AL central office on Bangabandhu Avenue.

**CITY DWELLERS SUFFER**

City residents suffered delays as they got stuck in long tailbacks on many streets of the capital yesterday due to the procession brought out by BCL men.

"Vehicles are moving very slowly on the Banglamotor-Matsya Bhaban road for more than an hour since 12:30pm, creating traffic jam due to a huge rally brought out by Chhatra League," Md Shamsujjaman, assistant commissioner (Ramna Zone) traffic police, told The Daily Star.

# New voters

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The commission has also taken an initiative to purchase 2,000 sets of finger print recording machines and 2,000 more Image Recognition Intelligence Software (IRIS) scanners. Once those machines are received, the cards would be distributed across the country in a smoother way, said officials.

Besides, the commission has taken a number of steps to end the hassle of those who have lost their cards or want to replace them, said its officials.

For example, if anyone loses his or her National Identification (NID) Card, the person would no longer need to come to Dhaka to get a new one. The person can collect it from the regional election offices.

The commission has already given authority to the 10 regional election offices to reprint lost cards.

They also said the commission is thinking about withdrawing the clause that mandates filing of a general diary after a card is lost to make the process smoother.

Besides, the commission is planning to install a card management software to deliver the cards to citizens within 30 working days.

During that period, both the cardholder can track the status of the card online.

French company, Oberthur Technologies (OT), won the bid in January 2015 for production, personalisation and supply of the 90 million cards.

The EC scrapped the deal with OT for its failure to complete the production and supply of all cards on time after extending the deadline twice.

The EC worked out a plan to provide the smart cards to voters under the Identification System for Enhancing Access to Services (IDEA) project in 2011.

The use of National Identification (NID) Card is becoming essential for Bangladeshis, as they are similar to social security cards or passports, which are equally important in other countries.

# Too fat to march

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Or as an internal document quoted by the El Pais daily said, "without heightened vigilance, we would be faced with loss of prestige."

The weight-loss programme includes a nutrition plan and sport, as well as medical tests, conferences and psychological monitoring.

The Spanish Legion is not the only army unit to develop this type of programme.

But according to the internal document quoted by El Pais, the weight issues stem from the relatively high average age of members of the Legion as well as a lack of sports equipment that would give them "varied and motivating" training.