AL, Jamaat men snatch Jamaat leader from police

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Pabna*

Awami League and Jamaat-Shibir men snatched a detained Jamaat leader from police in Sirajganj's Ullapara upazila yesterday afternoon.

Alauddin Al Azad, 40, of Koira Charpara in the upazila, is the acting secretary of Ullapara upazila unit Jamaat, police said.

Dewan Kaushik Ahmed, officer-in-charge of Ullapara Police Station, said acting on a tip-off, a police team raided Koira Charpara around 3:00pm to arrest Azad.

When police were taking him to the police station in handcuffs, a group of Jamaat-Shibir and AL men, led by local AL leader Saiful Islam Khoka, attacked police and snatched the Jamaat man, the police official said.

Saiful and Rashidul Islam, a local Chhatra League leader, both are cousins of Alauddin. The two, along with the Jamaat-Shibir men, took away Alauddin from police, the OC added.

Alauddin stands accused in 20 criminal cases, he said, adding that he had been absconding for a long time.

"We are trying to nab the Jamaat leader as well as to detain the accused attackers," the police official said.

Alien life

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and lead author of the study published in Earth and Planetary Science Letters. "Conditions in this habitable zone would have been similar to places on Earth where underground life exists."

On Earth, organisms known as subsurface lithotrophic microbial ecosystems or SliMEs are able to live in similar conditions. They cannot get energy from sunlight, so instead peel electrons off molecules in the environments that surround them.

Around four billion years ago, Mars would have had the same conditions that sustain huge numbers of microbes down on Earth today.

The researchers are clear that the findings don't definitively mean that alien life existed on Mars. But they are important evidence that if life did get started there it would have been able to sustain itself.

By combining a range of different data about the red planet, scientists found that it probably had a habitable zone that stretched for kilometres deep and all around the world. It would have existed for hundreds of millions of years.

Scientists now hope the findings can be used to inform future trips to Mars that will attempt to find evidence of alien life.

PBCP leader

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recovering firearms and explosives around 3:00am yesterday.

When the team reached near the Dhopaghata bridge, Abul's associates opened fire. Police returned fire, triggering the "gunfight", the police official said.

At one stage, Abul attempted to flee and was hit by bullets. The others managed to escape, the additional SP said, adding that Abul was taken to Pabna General Hospital where he died later.

Police claimed to have recovered a firearm and four bullets from the spot.

Abul stood accused in nine criminal cases, including murder, police said.

Four policemen were hurt during the "gunfight", police claimed.

They took first aid at Pabna General Hospital.

Plan to shift

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storms make the journey by sea dangerous or sometimes impossible.

"It is cut off from the mainland. What if someone needs emergency medical attention?" said Rohingya community leader Abdul Gowffer.

The UN has insisted that any relocation to Bhashan Char be voluntary.

Local authorities have been seeking to reassure refugees that they will be safe on the island.

"We are still working on it. We're talking to the families," Bangladesh's Refugee Commissioner Mohammad Abul Kalam told AFP.

One million displaced Rohingyas live on hillside in overcrowded shanties near the Myanmar border, in conditions aid groups warn put them at risk from floods, landslides and disease.

There was a further push to get the plan off the ground after 700,000 Rohingya, fleeing a violent crackdown in Myanmar in August last year, poured into southeast Bangladesh.

But rights groups have warned it is too risky to house refugees on the island. Hundreds of thousands have died in Bangladesh from natural disasters in the last 50 years, mostly in coastal areas.

Local officials have pointed to a newly-constructed three-metre (nine-feet) high embankment around the island they say will keep out tidal surges in the event of a cyclone.

But refugees remain wary.

"Any strong blow from a cyclone and, God forbid, the shelters would be wiped out," said a community leader, Mohammad Shoyeb.

Joy criticises Sampadak Parishad

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hacking and theft of data until this act. How are we supposed to prosecute hacking and theft of your data without this law? Government computers hold the National ID numbers and many other details of all our citizens. Your bank accounts, health records, land records, etc. are all being digitised and stored. If these are hacked, who will be to blame? You will blame the government. As the ICT advisor, I had recommended these laws to prevent hacking. Even digital surveillance inside government offices could capture pictures and videos of documents with citizen data. Audio surveillance could expose citizen information being discussed, Wi-Fi passwords, etc.

I understand this makes journalist's job harder, but should journalists be allowed to hack and capture any information, including citizen data being discussed inside a government office, in order to expose someone corrupt? No country in the world allows journalists to obtain data through illegal means, including the EU and US. Covert surveillance inside any US government office is illegal, even for journalists. Journalists must obtain their information through other sources.

I have a question for the foreign missions that have complained about this act; can journalists bring in hidden surveillance equipment inside your missions?

Another complaint is with regards to distorting the history of our Liberation War. We have seen how after August 15 1975, the BNP and Jamaat distorted the history of our Independence and the true story of the Father of our Nation Bangabandhu. They used these distortions to justify bringing back war criminals and making them ministers, along with giving the killers of Bangabandhu choice postings. Should there be no law against this? Should we not prevent this from happening in the future? Anyone who is against this section cannot be a true Bangalee. They must be hidden Jamaat supporters and Razakars.

I actually had this modelled on EU member state Holocaust Denial Laws. In 16 European countries, including most of the ones whose missions have complained about our act, you can be imprisoned for just saying less people were killed in the Holocaust.

So again for those foreign EU missions that have complained about our act, if you can have your Holocaust Denial Laws, why can't we have this law? If our law is in violation of UN and Human Rights charters, then are not your laws as well? This section must not be touched.

Next we come to the parts that deal with false electronic publications that incite violence and religious sentiment. In Ramu, a false post about the holy Quran being burnt led to an entire Buddhist village being attacked. Such incidents have occurred many times in our country. The most recent student protests were a prime example of false social media posts inciting people to violence. How are we supposed to deter such false incitement to violence without this act?

It is true this is partially covered by criminal law itself. Believe it or not, if you say or write something false that causes someone to commit violence against someone else, you can be charged with the crime. This is the case in all countries, including the US. However, without this act, you have to wait until someone is actually killed or hurt before you can prosecute. Should we wait until someone is killed? Or should we make a strong deterrent to attempting this in the first place?

In some European countries, especially Germany, there are laws against hate speech and inciting violence against people. Our act is no different.

Another complaint is that anyone can be arrested or searched for criminal activity under this act without a warrant. A warrant is only needed during investigation after the fact. During the commission of a crime no warrant is needed for arrest or search. This is basic criminal law in any country, including ours. If you call the police to report a theft, should they wait to get a warrant before arresting the thief and searching their belongings for the stolen items? Similarly, if the police track someone hacking online and locate them, should they wait for a warrant before stopping them?

In the US and most countries, if the police track someone online while they are doing something illegal, they can arrest them and search the location where they are without a warrant. A warrant is only needed if they want to arrest or search after the criminal act is over and the evidence points to that person. A warrant is never needed if they catch them in the act.

Finally, we come to the section about false publications that demean the state. I agree that this in effect gives the courts the power to decide what the truth is and what is false. However, take a look at the recent history in our country. Neither our Press Club nor the Editors' Council, indeed no media body has ever enforced their own charter of ethics and conduct. The current head of the Editors' Council is Mahfuz Anam, who confessed on television to running a false smear campaign against our Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina during the 1-11 dictatorship.

In the US or the EU he would have been forced to resign from journalism and he would never be employed as a journalist or editor again. By contrast in Bangladesh the Editors' Council jumped to his defence and has now even made him general secretary. I find this this astounding. Since the EU and the US embassy have issued their opinion on this act, they should also issue a statement on Mahfuz Anam's confession as the editor of a major national newspaper. Otherwise, they are being partisan and interfering in our internal affairs. The hypocrisy is mind boggling!

What does this also say about the ethics of the Editors' Council itself? Clearly they have none. In effect, the Editors' Council is saying that they should be allowed to run smear campaigns against governments and try to topple politicians they don't like with complete disregard for the truth. If they can do this to Sheikh Hasina, where does that leave the future of our country?

Since editors are not willing to follow their own ethical guidelines, we can let the courts decide what is true and what is false. Arrest does not automatically mean imprisonment. The government has to prove they knowingly published falsehoods. The burden of proof is on the government. Journalists and editors who have no intention of publishing falsehoods have nothing to worry about.

If the Editors' Council wants these sections changed, then they must enforce their own charters first. Any editor or journalist who has published anything false must be removed and never again be allowed to serve as a journalist or editor."

KL moves to reform policy

FROM PAGE 16

Mahathir Mohamad, has formed an independent committee which will begin its work in two weeks, he said, according to a report by Malaysian newspaper Malay Mail.

Kulasegaran said the committee, chaired by retired Court of Appeal judge Datuk Seri Hishamuddin Yunus, would conduct townhall sessions in every state to engage all the stakeholders in this regard.

"There are 13 members in the committee, including representatives from my ministry and the home ministry. The committee will come up with suggestions for the government on the holistic intake of foreign workers," he said.

The issue is of utmost importance for Bangladesh as there are an estimated 10 lakh Bangladeshis in Malaysia and half of them are undocumented.

According to migrants and researchers, the foreign workers' sector has been marred by corruption and mismanagement.

Malaysia had suspended the recruitment of Bangladeshi workers through the Foreign Workers' Application Process (SPPA), an online recruitment system, starting from September 1 this year, following allegations that a syndicate of ten Bangladeshi recruiting agencies, in connivance with certain political quarters of the then ruling alliance of Malaysia, had been raking in millions of Ringgit from the migrants.

Each of the Bangladeshis had been charged around Tk 4 lakh as recruitment cost, even though, as per the Government-to-Government (G-to-G) Plus mechanism, the cost should have been Tk 40,000 only.

Earlier from 2006-08, when all private recruiting agencies were involved in recruiting workers in Malaysia, the migration cost was around Tk 2 lakh, even after the two governments had set it at Tk 84,000.

Many of the migrant workers were also promised jobs that were non-existent.

The situation resulted in joblessness and exploitation of the Bangladeshi workers by Malaysian employers and agents. Then, in 2009, Malaysia had frozen labour recruitment from Bangladesh and later restarted it in 2012 through a state-level arrangement. That too did not work well, allegedly due to strong private lobbying in both countries.

In February 2016, the two countries signed the G-to-G Plus deal, under which some two lakh Bangladeshis migrated to Malaysia. After allegations of high-level corruption, the deal was subsequently suspended from September 1, 2018.

Bangladesh and Malaysia then decided to allow all licensed recruitment agencies to recruit labours from Bangladesh following a meeting between M Kulasegaran and Bangladesh's Expatriates' Welfare Minister Nurul Islam in Putrajaya on September 25.

However, the crucial issue in connection to labour relations with Malaysia is the undocumented Bangladeshi workers who are currently there, as the Malaysian government has been arresting thousands of undocumented workers, from Bangladesh and other countries, in a major crackdown from July 1 of this year.

While the Malaysian government wanted to deport the undocumented workers, rights groups have decried the move saying most of the migrants were undocumented because of exploitation by their employers and agents, with many also being victims of human trafficking.

Migrants said most of the five lakh Bangladeshi workers had also applied to the Malaysian immigration, but, of them, only about one lakh might have been issued work permits under the rehiring programme that ended on June 30, 2018.

Bangladesh's Expatriates' Welfare Ministry, in a statement made on September 25, said Malaysia was "positive" about the undocumented Bangladeshi workers, but did not clarify in detail.

Tarikat, BNF

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said the polls-time government would only carry out routine works.

Talking to The Daily Star, BNF Chairman SM Abul Kalam Azad said, "I am optimistic that the honourable prime minister will include me in the polls-time cabinet."

He said he was mentally ready to take on the responsibility.

Azad was elected MP from Dhaka-17 in the January 5, 2014, national polls. Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad had filed nomination papers to contest the polls, but he withdrew his candidature in line with the party's primary decision to boycott the polls.

Asked whether the government communicated with him about his inclusion in the polls-time cabinet, Azad said time has not arrived yet.

Azad hit the headlines when he ousted BNF founder Nazmul Huda, a former BNP minister, a few months after formation of the party in 2012. Subsequently, Azad declared himself as the BNF chairman.

The party was registered with the Election Commission in 2013. A total of 22 BNF candidates contested the last parliamentary polls.

On the other hand, three BTF nominees took part in the last general election which was boycotted by the BNP and most other political parties.

BTF Chairman Syed Nazibul Bashar Maizvandari, a lawmaker from Chattogram-2, said, "I think I should be included in the [polls-time] cabinet. I believe the honourable prime minister will look into the matter in due time."

Only five political parties of the 14-party alliance have representatives in Jatiya Sangsad. Of them, the AL, Workers Party, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal and Jatiya Party have representatives in the current cabinet, Nazibul told this correspondent.

"I hope a representative from our party will be included in the polls-time cabinet as we were not given any post in the present cabinet."

The BTF was founded in 2005 by Nazibul, nearly nine years after he resigned from BNP.

There are representatives of seven political parties, including the AL, in the current parliament. Five of them have members in the cabinet.

The BNP and most other opposition parties have been demanding an election-time nonpartisan government to ensure a free, fair and inclusive parliamentary election. The government, however, rejected the demand terming it unconstitutional.

The 11th parliamentary election is likely to be held in late December.

Ex-CJ Sinha

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DC on Saturday.

On Thursday, barrister Nazmul Huda, chief of Bangladesh National Alliance and former communications minister, filed a case with Shahbagh Police Station accusing Sinha of corruption, Abul Hasan, officer-in-charge of the police station, told The Daily Star yesterday.

In another development, the Anti-Corruption Commission decided to look into an allegation of money laundering against Justice Sinha's younger brother Ananta Kumar Sinha.

Pranab Kumar Bhattacharya, ACC public relations officer, told The Daily Star yesterday that an officer would soon be asked to investigate into an allegation that Ananta had sent Tk 2.3 crore to New Jersey illegally.

An autobiography of Justice Sinha titled "A Broken Dream: Rule of Law, Human Rights and Democracy" came out on September 16.

Lalitmohan-Dhanabati Memorial Foundation holds the copyright of the book.

In his autobiography, Justice Sinha wrote about his early life, his appointment as chief justice of Bangladesh, the separation of power and the independence of judiciary, 16th amendment to the constitution and its aftermath, ethical values of judges of the highest court and politicians, and the circumstances behind his resignation.

CATALONIA REFERENDUM ANNIVERSARY

Separatists block roads, rail line

AFP, *Barcelona*

Pro-independence protesters obstructed major roads and a high-speed railway line in Spain's Catalonia region yesterday, one year after a banned referendum on secession marred by police violence.

"Everything began on October 1 and everything goes back to October 1," the region's separatist president Quim Torra said in a ceremony in Sant Julia de Ramis in northern Catalonia on a stage next to a large black and white banner that read "No forgetting, no forgiving."

Some 10 kilometres (six miles) away in Girona, hundreds of activists, many covering their faces with scarves, occupied high-speed railway tracks for around three hours, blocking services linking Figueres, Girona and Barcelona, Spain's state-owned rail operator Renfe said.

Central streets in Barcelona and Lleida were blocked, as was the AP-7 motorway, south of Barcelona, and A2 linking Barcelona to Madrid, images on Catalan TV showed.

Activists also got into Catalonia's regional government building in Girona and took away the facade's Spanish flag, replacing it with a red, yellow and blue separatist flag.

In his speech, Torra praised their actions, saying they were "doing well in putting on the pressure."

Stay alert

FROM PAGE 1

About the country's progress, the PM said although Bangladesh earned a dignified position in the world, there was no room for complacency as it would invite an inevitable fall.

She said Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was killed to foil the victory achieved in 1971. "They are constantly hatching conspiracies."

These conspiracies have led to the emergence of a section of people who never do politics of vote as they have no capability to form a party, the PM added.

"But they've the desire to be in power. For this, they shake hands with the defeated forces of 1971 and the killers of 1975."

Without naming any media outlet, Hasina said some newspapers were ready to confuse people with a lot of false information. "I know they're sitting with information; they will release those one after another and confuse people about all our achievements by providing false information."

She said many were now speaking about fair and neutral election, but they never talked about the so-called "Yes"-"No" vote introduced by military dictator Ziaur Rahman.

Hasina said the AL had established people's voting rights in Bangladesh.

She called upon the people, including AL leaders and workers, to stay alert to conspiracies ahead of the next general election.

The PM described her participation in the UNGA session and other high-level events as well as her meetings with world leaders as very successful.

During her visit to the USA, she received the prestigious "International Achievement Award" given by Inter Press Service, a global news agency, for her dynamic leadership in addressing the Rohingya crisis. Besides, Global Hope Coalition conferred upon her the "2018 Special Recognition for Outstanding Leadership Award".

She returned home yesterday morning.

Delhi to help Dhaka

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between the two countries, especially the road and rail connectivity, the release added.

He also praised the planned development which the present Bangladesh government has been pursuing side by side the present success of Bangladesh in cricket. "Bangladesh needs to focus on connectivity and institutional development to have a leap in the development areas."

Kamal said Hasina pursues a policy to build multifaceted relations with India, driven by genuine goodwill, trust, understanding and mutual respect.

He mentioned that Bangladesh attaches highest importance to its relations with India.

Extending his thanks to Jaitley for supporting the planned development of Bangladesh by giving approvals to the projects to be financed under the Indian Line of Credit, Kamal said the economies of India and Bangladesh go hand in hand.

In response, Jaitley said if Bangladesh and India are well connected through road and rail networks, it will be beneficial for both the countries, as it will create economic opportunities for the people of the two countries. "Bangladesh is secure with its border with India, and no threat is possessed there."

Kamal informed the Indian finance minister about the Bangladesh Delta Plan-2100.

"Three things are most important for human being, firstly, air for breathing; secondly, water for life; and thirdly, agriculture for food security. Fresh and clean water are the major components for all these three areas," he added.

Kamal said more than 80 transborder rivers and water bodies shared by different African nations were being considered for reserving water.

In this regard, Kamal requested Jaitley to help Bangladesh take similar initiatives for the transboundary rivers and lakes to deal with the future possible water shortage in Bangladesh, the press release said.

He informed the Indian finance minister that Bangladesh would start capital dredging in the major rivers. Bangladesh needed support from India to this end.

In response, Jaitley assured Kamal that India would stand by Bangladesh in ensuring shared water bodies to be dredged on both sides.

New road

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constructed as part of a road network plan which aims to reduce traffic congestion in the port city.

"Buses coming from Dhaka or any part of the country can use the road to go to Cox's Bazar, bypassing the busy thoroughfare of the port city", he said.

There is also a plan to build a new town along the road, and develop a world class tourist area as part of the project, Salam added.

The road will also protect the coastal people from tidal surges, which in 1991 lashed out in the coastal area claiming hundreds of thousands of lives.

Kazi Hasan Bin Shams, project director, told The Daily Star that a strong embankment was necessary to protect important structures like the Chattogram port, CEPZ (Chittagong Export Processing Zone) and Chattogram airport.

The 16km long and 22m wide road would suit that purpose. It will be 33 feet above the sea level so that it can work as an embankment as well as a protective wall against tidal surge, he added.

Vehicles and trucks carrying goods from the port will be able to avoid traffic and ply the road, which will be connected to Dhaka-Chattogram highway.

The road, Hasan said, will also be connected to Anwara using a currently under construction tunnel under the Karnaphuli river.

A stretch of five kilometres of the road will be turned into a tourist spot as Tk 500 crore has been allocated to make an international standard sea beach which, once completed, will be able to accommodate at least 10,000 tourists every day.

Hasan said that there would be jetties so that tourists can descend into the beach, seating arrangements, parking areas, kid zones and food courts, along with security posts.

CDA has completed 75 percent work of the project. Though the road is scheduled to be completed by June 2019, CDA expects it will finish the work by December 2018.

CDA is constructing the road in coordination with Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC).

After two years of feasibility tests from 2006, JBIC decided to finance the project. Of the total cost of Tk 2,426 crore, the government's expenditure stands at Tk 1,726 crore and JBIC will provide the additional Tk 700 crore.

CDA began the construction work in 2011.

SC upholds

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about the number of Liberation War martyrs. She said, "There are controversies over how many were martyred in the Liberation War."

Raihan Farooque Imam of Naragati in Narail filed a defamation case against her on December 24 in connection with the remark.

On January 5, 2016, AB Siddiqui, president of Jananetri Parishad, filed another defamation case with the Dhaka Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Court against the BNP chief.

Following two separate bail petitions filed by Khaleda, the HC in August this year granted her bail in the cases.

The government later filed two separate petitions with the SC seeking stay on the HC orders.

Khaleda has been behind bars after being convicted by a Dhaka court on February 8 this year in the Zia Orphanage Trust corruption case.