

Two 'robbers' killed in 'gunfights'

STAR REPORT

Two suspected robbers were killed in separate "gunfights" in Savar and Rangpur yesterday.

They were identified as Shamim Hossain, 45, and Md Masud Rana, 30, respectively.

According to Deepak Chandra Saha, officer-in-charge of Dhamrai Police Station, Shamim, from Jashore, was the ringleader of a notorious robbery gang in Savar. He was accused in at least eight cases, he said.

He also said Shamim was arrested by a police team from Kalampur area of Savar on Sunday evening.

Acting on Shamim's information, another police team conducted a drive in Ashulia's Tongabari area for arresting his cohorts. Sensing police presence, Shamim's cohorts opened fire, forcing the law enforcers to retaliate which triggered the "gunfight," the OC said.

Shamim was killed on the spot when he was caught in the line of fire while trying to flee.

The body was sent to Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College and Hospital morgue for autopsy, the police official said, adding a pistol, one bullet

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They still join

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The Election Commission had announced the polls schedule on November 8. Yesterday, it revised the schedule setting December 30 as the voting day.

The cabinet also approved in principle the draft of the Bangladesh Tariff Commission (amendment) Bill, 2018 although Roads Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader, also the ruling Awami League general secretary, on several occasions had said the election-time government would not take any policy-making decision.

Asked whether the cabinet of a polls-time government can give the go-ahead to amending a law, the cabinet secretary said there was no legal bar in this regard. He said it might be termed a routine work of the cabinet as it didn't involve any development work.

Replying to another question, Shafiqul said, "The incumbent government is a regular government. The polls-time government is a name given by us. The constitution doesn't mention anything about this."

The Hasina-led cabinet is comprised of 34 ministers, 17 state ministers and two deputy ministers. Besides, the PM's seven advisers and one special envoy enjoy a minister's status.

Suu Kyi

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marking the 20th anniversary of her arrest and 20 years since it declared her a prisoner of conscience.

The AI yesterday announced withdrawal of its highest honour from Suu Kyi in light of the Myanmar leader's shameful betrayal of the values she once stood for.

A United Nations fact-finding mission has recently concluded that Myanmar military was committing genocide against the Rohingyas and other ethnic minorities and that Suu Kyi failed in her duty to protect her own citizens.

According to a press statement of the rights organisation, Amnesty International's Secretary General Kumi Naidoo wrote to Suu Kyi on November 11 to inform her of their decision.

Naidoo expressed the organisation's disappointment that Suu Kyi had not used her political and moral authority to safeguard human rights, justice or equality in Myanmar, citing her apparent indifference to atrocities committed by the Myanmar military and increasing intolerance of freedom of expression.

"As an Amnesty International Ambassador of Conscience, our expectation was that you would continue to use your moral authority to speak out against injustice wherever you saw it, not least within Myanmar itself," wrote Kumi Naidoo.

"Today, we are profoundly dismayed that you no longer represent a symbol of hope, courage, and the undying defence of human rights. Amnesty International cannot justify your continued status as a recipient of the Ambassador of Conscience award and so with great sadness we are hereby withdrawing it from you."

Since Suu Kyi became the de facto leader of Myanmar's civilian-led government in April 2016, her administration has been actively involved in the commission or perpetuation of multiple human rights violations, the Amnesty press release said.

"Aung San Suu Kyi's failure to speak out for the Rohingyas is one reason why we can no longer justify her status as an Ambassador of Conscience," said Kumi Naidoo.



The office of the Awami League president in the capital's Dhanmondi area has been teeming with leaders and activists since the ruling party started selling nomination papers for the upcoming national polls on Friday. The picture was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

52 seek AL ticket for Barguna-1!

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Gono Bhaban last night decided not to interview the nomination seekers this time. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, also the president of AL, and some top party leaders were present, said party sources.

According to a decision of the meeting, Hasina will address the nomination seekers at the Gono Bhaban tomorrow and give directives to them.

SHAMBHU-JAHANGIR RIVALRY
Two factions of Barguna AL are led by Shambhu and Jahangir. A group of party leaders, led by Jahangir, at a press conference in September had declared lawmaker Shambhu persona non grata in his constituency. They brought corruption allegations against the MP.

Earlier in April, leaders of the anti-Shambhu faction met party chief Hasina and raised various allegations against the lawmaker.

Issuing show-cause notices to the two rival leaders, the ruling party then asked Jahangir to explain why the lawmaker was declared persona non grata and Shambhu to give an explanation why such a situation arose in his

area.
Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, Jahangir said some competent persons have collected nomination papers to contest the December 30 polls.

"On information, Shambhu bought a large number of nomination forms with the help of his supporters," he said.

The AL leader said they only demanded the party nominate a candidate with a clean image for Barguna-1.

This newspaper could not reach Shambhu for comments as his phone was found switched off.

Apart from Barguna-1, some other constituencies, including Brahmanbaria-5 and Feni-3, also saw a large number of nomination seekers. This has worried the AL as it will be difficult for the party to pick a single candidate in those constituencies and engage the others in campaigning for the party nominee, party sources said.

A total of 23 MP aspirants have collected nomination papers for Brahmanbaria-5 while 21 have bought nomination forms for Feni-3.

The AL candidate was defeated in Feni-3, traditionally a BNP stronghold, in the last national election on January 5, 2014. Independent candidate Rahimullah had won the election, boycotted by the BNP and other major opposition parties.

However, the situation was different in some constituencies which saw only one nomination seeker. AL President Hasina (Gopalganj-3), General Secretary Obaidul Quader (Noakhali-5), presidium member Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim (Gopalganj-2), central committee member Abul Hasanat Abdullah (Barisal-1), and Hasina's cousins Sheikh Helaluddin (Bagerhat-1) and Sheikh Jewel (Khulna-2) are the lone nomination seekers in their respective constituencies, said sources.
LOOKING FOR LOYAL CANDIDATES
The AL's nomination seekers have been asked to describe in the nomination paper their families' role during the Liberation War in 1971, after the assassination of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1975 and during the politi-

cal changeover in 2007.

Contacted, a central AL leader said the party faced its biggest crisis since the assassination of Bangabandhu when Hasina was put behind bars and some of its leaders tried to keep her out of politics. "So the Awami League wants to know about the nomination seekers' role during its crisis moment. It will help us find out leaders who are dedicated and loyal to the party and its president," he told The Daily Star on condition of anonymity.

STARASPIRANTS
Several prominent personalities have bought AL's nomination forms. Among them are Bangladesh ODI cricket captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza (Narail-2) and former Bangladesh high commissioner to Australia Lt Gen (ret'd) Masud Uddin Chowdhury (Feni-3), a much talked about army official during the rule of the military-backed caretaker government in 2007.

Besides, film actors Ferozque Pathan, Shakil Khan, TV personalities Shomi Kaiser and Rokeya Prachi also bought nomination papers.

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Rutted within

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developed on the highway within a year of its launch. They are using their regular maintenance fund to finance the patch-up work.

Upon receiving the report, the RHD has proposed another Tk 900 crore project for maintenance of the highway, a planning ministry official said, wishing not to be named.

Two engineers from the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED), assigned by the Anti-Corruption Commission, have examined different layers and materials of the highway in a laboratory and found the materials to be appropriate, the RHD told an IMED team.

However, it did acknowledge some "construction faults", added the official.

The planning ministry has formed a committee to review RHD's arguments for the highway repair project and decide if the estimated cost is justified, the official said. "The committee has already inspected the highway and the project will be finalised on the basis of its report."

The two-member IMED team had inspected the highway in April. It mentioned in its report that 10-12mm deep ruts had developed on the fast lanes of the highway. Small cracks and potholes have also appeared at several points, the report said.

During inspection, Load Control Stations, where lorries are weighed, were found non-functional at Meghna-Gumti bridge and at Sitakunda.

An official of a transport workers' body on condition of anonymity said non-articulated lorries usually carry between 22 and 30 tonnes on the highway. The articulated ones carry even heavier loads.

"It seems that the aim of implementing the project [expanding the highway to dual carriageway] has been achieved. However, lengthy toll collection process at the bridges still plagues the highway with traffic jam," the report read.

The IMED committee recommended quick and regular maintenance work for the highway to tackle the ever-increasing traffic flow.

"Otherwise, this highway, crucial to keep the country's economy flowing, may turn unfit."

The Daudkandi-Chattogram four-lane highway project was initiated in 2006 and was scheduled to be completed by June 2012.

The highway was upgraded from two lanes to four lanes for quicker and smoother transportation of goods and passengers. The report also observed that due to the delayed completion, it failed to earn due economic benefits.

The project saw a total of 12 project directors in 11 years.

Khaleda looks to contest from jail

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On completion of all the formalities, the forms will be filed with the returning officers concerned, seeking her candidacy from Bogra-6 and 7 and Feni-1.

Asked if Khaleda will face any obstacle in running for the election because of the two recent verdicts on her, Moudud said her lawyers will sit soon to discuss the legal issues.

On October 29, the BNP chief was sentenced to seven years in jail by a lower court in Zia Charitable Trust graft case.

She lost another legal battle the next day as the High Court doubled her five-year jail term handed down by a lower court in the Zia Orphanage Trust graft case in February. Her appeal was rejected by the HC against the lower court's conviction.

Her lawyers are yet to file appeals against both the verdicts as they did not get certified copies of the judgments. They think they need to file the appeals as soon as possible so that she does not face any difficulty joining the electoral race.

The two verdicts have opened a debate whether Khaleda, a former prime minister, is eligible to contest the polls.

It remains a disputed issue as to when the disqualification under the article 66 (2) (d) of the constitution will take effect on an individual.

The article says, "A person shall be disqualified for election as, or for being, a member of Parliament who has been, on conviction for a criminal offence involving moral turpitude, sentenced to imprisonment for a term of not less than two years, unless a

period of five years has elapsed since his release."

In a number of Supreme Court verdicts in cases related to Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad, it has been observed that as long as someone's conviction has not become final and his/her appeal remains pending against the conviction, a parliamentary aspirant cannot be disqualified from running for polls and an incumbent MP cannot be removed citing article 66 (2) (d) of the constitution.

Talking to journalists yesterday, Election Commissioner Rafiqul Islam said deciding the fate of Khaleda Zia's nomination papers is the jurisdiction of the returning officers of the constituencies.

She can file appeal with the EC if she feels aggrieved by the decision of the returning officers, he said. "The full commission will dispose of the appeal."

The BNP chairperson can move the court if the EC's decision goes against her, the election commissioner added.

Since landing in jail in February, Khaleda had also been struggling to secure bail in a number of other cases to come out of prison. Facing more than three dozen cases, she was granted bail in some but denied in the rest.

The returning officers are supposed to make the decision on her nomination forms on December 2, the day fixed for scrutiny.

As per the new schedule, the election will be held on December 30. November 28 is the last date for submitting nomination forms and December 9 for withdrawing candidacy.

The Election Commission yesterday

announced its decision to reschedule the election amid calls for a deferment of the polls from the BNP-led 20-party alliance and Jatiya Oikyafront.

At the meeting with party's senior leaders, Khaleda asked them to keep intact the unity of Jatiya Oikyafront, a newly formed alliance of the BNP and some other parties, and take it forward further.

"Madam expressed hope that we would move ahead taking with us the people," BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir told reporters after meeting the party chief.

Talking to this newspaper, Moudud and Jamiruddin said Khaleda advised her party colleagues to persuade international community to send a large number of observers during the election.

SALE OF NOMINATION PAPERS
The distribution of nomination papers started a day after the 20-party combine and Oikyafront announced the decision to join the parliamentary polls.

The sale began with BNP leaders Mirza Fakhru, Nazrul Islam Khan and Mirza Abbas purchasing three nomination forms for Khaleda around 10:45am amid presence of thousands of party men in and outside the party office.

Since morning, nomination seekers from across the country began to throng the Nayapaltan office accompanied by supporters. Within hours, the streets in front of the office and adjacent roads were filled with BNP men.

After the Election Commission on Thursday announced the polls schedule fixing December 23 for the election, there were two different pictures in the two rival camps -- Awami League and BNP.

Masterful Mushfiqur scales new peak

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Bangladeshi and the first wicketkeeper-batsman in Test cricket to record a second double hundred, helping the home side continue their dominance against Zimbabwe on the second day of the second and final Test at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Riding on Mushfiqur's epic unbeaten 219, which featured 18 fours and a six, Bangladesh declared their first innings on 522 for seven and Zimbabwe finished the day on 25 for one, with the home side looking to take a vise-grip of the match on the third day.

Records fell left and right as the right-hander also made the highest

score by a Bangladesh batsman, eclipsing Shakib Al Hasan's 217 against New Zealand in Wellington last year.

It was the fourth double hundred by a Bangladesh batsman and it was Mushfiqur who registered the maiden double hundred back in 2013 at Galle against Sri Lanka, which Tamim Iqbal crossed in 2015 against Pakistan by scoring 206 runs.

There were a few more records broken by the diminutive batsman in terms of facing the most number of deliveries and the most time spent at the crease by a Bangladesh batsman in the longest format.

The stage was set after the first day as Mushfiqur resumed the second day on

111 with Bangladesh aiming for a big first innings total on 303 for five.

Mushfiqur paired with stand-in skipper Mahmudullah Riyad and it looked as if both batsmen were heading for a big partnership. But Mahmudullah once again paid a heavy price for poking his bat out indecisively with non-existent feet movement off the bowling of Kyle Jarvis after scoring 36 runs.

Mushfiqur, however, remained as solid as he was on the first day while Ariful Haque was guilty of being dismissed in the same manner cheaply. After putting up a record fourth-wicket stand with Mominul on the first day, Mushfiqur then paired with Mehedi

Hasan Miraz and added a Bangladesh record 144-run unbeaten stand for the eighth wicket.

It took another 147 balls to reach his 150 after reaching his hundred in 187 balls. He started to open up more since then and his drive through extra cover off Sikandar Raza, with the off-spinner operating from around the wicket, was a piece of virtuoso batsmanship that will not be forgotten soon by those who witnessed it. But the focus remained rock solid on 199 when he watchfully played out a maiden over from leg-spinner Brandon Mavuta.

The moment arrived in his very next ball in the next over, when he pulled a

Raza short ball towards square leg to take a single off his 407th delivery 15 minutes after tea and celebrated the feat in grand style.

Mehedi remained unbeaten on 68, his second half-century, which he scored with the help of five fours and a six.

Pacer Jarvis was the pick of the bowlers, bagging his third five-wicket haul and second against Bangladesh.

In reply left-arm spinner Taijul Islam, the hero of the first Test, removed Zimbabwe skipper Hamilton Masakadza on 14, who had been lucky to get that far as he was dropped at second slip by Ariful Haque to deny debutant pacer Khaled Ahmed a maiden Test wicket.