

DEATH THREAT TO PM

BNP leader Giasuddin jailed for 3 years

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A Chattogram court yesterday sentenced BNP Vice-chairman Giasuddin Quader Chowdhury to three years' imprisonment in a case filed over issuing death threat to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and making derogatory comments about her.

Verifying all records and evidence, the court of Senior Judicial Magistrate Shahidullah Kaiser handed the sentence after finding him guilty, said Additional Public Prosecutor Shamir Das Gupta.

The court also fined the BNP leader Tk 5,000, in default of which he will have to serve three more months in jail, he added.

Shamir said six witnesses testified at the trial. He said Giasuddin had



jumped bail this year.

Giasuddin is the younger brother of executed war criminal Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury.

On May 31 last year, Nazim Uddin Muhuri, Fatikchhari upazila Awami League general

secretary, filed the case after the BNP leader issued the death threat to the prime minister and made derogatory comments about her at an event in the upazila on May 29 that year.

At the programme, organised by the local unit of BNP, Giasuddin had reportedly said Hasina would have the fate or worse than that of her father Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

After the incident, four cases were lodged against Giasuddin.

Tigers reach India

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of the two years will be a suspended sentence provided Shakib satisfies ICC's conditions during the first year.

The ban came after Shakib had extended his identity as a leader on the field to one off it by spearheading a three-day players' strike last week to improve the income and benefits of domestic cricketer. To top it off, Bangladesh will also be without another dressing-room leader in opener Tamim Iqbal, who is sitting out the tour to be with his pregnant wife.

Stepping into fill the enormous vacuum will be the experienced Mahmudullah Riyad -- who was named captain for the T20Is beginning from November 3 -- and Mominul Haque, a somewhat surprising choice to lead in the Tests given that he is not

known as one of the leaders within the team.

Adding to that is the gulf in quality between the teams. India are ranked fifth in T20Is while Bangladesh are 10th. The challenge is even steeper in Tests for the ninth-ranked Tigers as they will be facing up in the two Tests against the top-ranked side in the world.

If that was not enough, Bangladesh will be playing their first ever day-night Test in the second match in Kolkata. Bangladeshi players only played one longer-version match in the final of the Bangladesh Cricket League in 2013. It will also be the first match with the pink ball for India, but they will be at a decided advantage given that they are the home team as well as having far greater longer-version pedigree.

ACC seeks info

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Meanwhile, the ACC yesterday filed a case against Kalabagan Krira Chakra President Shafiqul Alam Feroz for amassing Tk 2.68 crore beyond known sources of income.

According to the case statement, Shafiq, a central executive committee member of Krishak League, showed immovable properties worth Tk 1.40 crore and moveable Tk 1.23 crore in his 2017-18 tax files.

The ACC has not found any legal source of his income for having the wealth.

Quoting BFUI, the anti-graft body said Shafiq has another Tk 4.2 lakh at his bank accounts which he concealed in his income tax files.

"It is learnt from different sources that Shafiq became a member of Kalabagan Krira Chakra in exchange for Tk 60 lakh, and there are two luxury flats in his wife's name," reads

the FIR.

Shafiq was arrested on September 20 at Dhanmondi Club. Two cases were lodged against him under the firearms and the narcotics control acts.

Yesterday, the ACC also asked the superintendent of police of Special Branch to take necessary steps so that 11 officials of Public Works Department, housing and planning ministries could not leave the country.

In a letter, signed by ACC Director Syed Iqbal Hossain, said there was an allegation that some contractors, including Golam Kibria Shamim, popularly known as GK Shamim, bribed government officials to get large contracts.

"The ACC has primarily found the allegation to be true," the letter said, adding that the commission learnt that the officials were trying to leave the country.

42m people

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"When we use our new elevation data, we find far more people living in vulnerable areas than we previously understood," the study's co-author Ben Strauss, CEO and chief scientist of Climate Central, told AFP.

Eminent Bangladeshi climate expert Saleemul Haq agreed with the study findings.

He, however, said, "It needs further research at the national level to know exactly what will happen in Bangladesh."

'ASIA TO BE HIT HARDEST'

The new study, which contains findings from individual assessments of 135 countries across multiple climate scenarios and years, says deadly storm surges, cyclones and rising sea would hit Asia the hardest.

More than two thirds of the vulnerable populations live in some countries of Asia, including Bangladesh, China, India, Vietnam, Indonesia and Thailand, says the study, titled "New Elevation Data Triple Estimates of Global Vulnerability to Sea-Level Rise and Coastal Flooding".

A map created using a form of artificial intelligence, known as neural networks, shows that by 2050 some coastal cities from South and South East Asia will be under water during high tide.

Millions of people living in the cities of those countries, including Dhaka, Bangkok, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Taizhou, Surabaya, Mumbai, Ho Chi Minh City and Osaka -- would find themselves in flood zones, the report mentions.

"These assessments show the potential of climate change to reshape cities, economies, coastlines, and entire global regions within our lifetimes," said Dr Scott Kulp, a senior scientist at Climate Central and lead author of the study.

Dr Benjamin Strauss said, "For most of the global coasts we didn't know the height of the ground beneath our feet."

The researchers used a model

called CoastalDEM digital elevation modelling, a new digital elevation model developed by Climate Central, for the study.

Earlier, researchers had used Nasa's Shuttle Radar Topography Mission (SRTM) which gave an estimation of population at risk due to sea level rise three times lower than the current one.

Although the Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change (IPCC) in its sixth report published last month projected that sea level would go up by a metre by the end of the century, the new report says the height will rise by at least two metres.

Contacted, Dr Atik Rahman, executive director of Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies (BCAS), one of the lead authors of IPCC, said the panel projected the sea level rise based on old published papers.

"So the IPCC did not project the sea level rise correctly. Actually the sea level is rising more rapidly as Arctic, Antarctic and mountain glaciers are melting faster than we thought," he said. "So the impact of climate change is going to be harder than we thought."

Meanwhile, some experts differ from the study findings relating to Bangladesh.

Dr Ainun Nishat, professor emeritus, Brac University, said most of the coastal areas in the country have embankments which are four to five metres high and the government has taken initiatives to increase the height to 6.5 metres.

"So the areas, as projected in the new study, are not going to be inundated," he said.

The expert believed areas 100 kilometres away from the coastal zones in districts like Pirojpur and Shariatpur would be badly affected as there are no embankments there.

"But for us, the main challenge would be the increasing salinity in the river water due to the rising sea level and tackling natural disasters with what we have," he added.



Eight-year-old Mariam is being taken out of Suhrawardy hospital after she received treatment. Her sister Farzana died in the explosion.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Six kids killed in cylinder blast

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Suhrawardy hospital.

He was near the scene at the time of the blast.

"My son wanted Tk 5 from me for a balloon. I promised him of giving the money after I returned at night. I began to leave, pulling my rickshaw. I was only yards away when I felt that the very ground had been shaken by the explosion," Nur said.

Nur's shirt was smeared with his son's blood.

Eight-year-old Mariam Rikta narrowly escaped with minor injuries. She was sitting beside the body of her sister Farzana at Suhrawardy hospital, unable to speak.

Farzana had died on the spot.

Mostaq, uncle of another victim Riya, said his niece went there to buy a balloon for her four-year-old brother Mahim.

She died of her injuries at the hospital.

Parents of most of the victims are rickshaw puller, garment worker, domestic help or day labourers.

Thirteen-year-old Biswajit's mother Jhuma said she didn't know whether her son would see again as his eyes were damaged by splinters.

She added that she didn't have the money required for proper treatment of his eyes.

WHAT CAUSED THE TRAGEDY

Firefighters and experts said old and

discarded LPG and CNG cylinders are often used to store gas used for inflating balloons.

Samsul Alam, chief inspector of the Department of Explosives, told The Daily Star that balloon sellers often modified the upper part of old and discarded LPG and CNG cylinders and used them.

It is very risky and often results in explosions, he said.

He added that the sellers used a chemical reaction to produce hydrogen inside the cylinder. But they often do not know how to control the production.

"We gave advertisement in newspapers to make people aware of the dangers," he said.

Myanmar out to mislead int'l community

FROM PAGE 1

Bangladesh is now hosting over 1.1 million Rohingyas who have fled their homeland in Rakhine after being persecuted by their own country. Myanmar didn't take back a single Rohingya from Bangladesh over the last two years.

Two repatriation attempts were unsuccessful as Myanmar "failed to remove trust deficit" among the Rohingyas and there was "lack of conducive environment" in Rakhine for their return.

Bangladesh said Myanmar should seriously consider a comprehensive participation of the international community in creating conducive environment for the return as well as in the monitoring of repatriation and reintegration process.

"Myanmar should also cooperate with the international community to eliminate the culture of impunity for the sake of a durable solution to the protracted problem," the foreign ministry said.

STORIES COOKED UP

The ministry said Myanmar Union Minister for International Cooperation U Kyaw Tin resorted to misrepresentation of the whole issue.

He also laid unjustified blames on Bangladesh in his effort to refute the well-founded remarks by the Bangladesh foreign minister on the Rohingya crisis at the preparatory ministerial meeting of the 18th NAM Summit in Baku, Azerbaijan, on October 23.

In his statement, Tin accused Bangladesh of mischaracterising the Rohingya crisis as "religious persecution", "driving an ethnic group out of the country", "ethnic cleansing" or "genocide", among others.

In reality, such observations are made by the international community based on documented evidence, which bear unmistakable signs of forcible deportation of a community from its ancestral homeland in Rakhine in the face of atrocities against the civilian population, said the Bangladesh foreign ministry.

It said the nature and extent of atrocities in 2017 surpassed all previous records.

Tin claimed that the crisis is confined only in the northern strip of Rakhine State and people of different faiths are living in harmony in the remaining areas across the country.

The Bangladesh foreign ministry said it is a "well-known fact that continued disenfranchisement of the country's ethnic minorities by successive governments of Myanmar and suppression of their rights and justified demands by force rendered Myanmar as one of the world's largest homes to Internally Displaced Persons and a leading source of cross-border displacements".

A substantial number of forcibly displaced Myanmar nationals of varied ethnic and religious backgrounds are in temporary shelters in different countries for decades and only a few could return and reintegrate into their homeland.

WHAT HISTORIANS SAY

According to historians, Rohingya is a distinct ethnic community evolved

over centuries through mingling of migrated people of various races and cultures from different parts of the world with the local people in Rakhine.

As such, on two previous occasions Myanmar recognised displaced Rohingyas in Bangladesh as their lawful residents and repatriated them.

After the recent influx, Myanmar signed bilateral instruments with Bangladesh identifying them as "Myanmar residents".

As far as the nationality of the Rohingyas is concerned, there cannot be any scope for confusion.

The foreign ministry said attempts to create controversy over their identity at this stage clearly indicate that Myanmar still pursues the policy of exclusion and marginalisation of its ethnic minorities.

The Myanmar statement blamed ARSA as usual for initiating the crisis and preventing the displaced Rohingyas from returning in order to advance their political agenda.

"Myanmar should understand that so-called ARSA attack on August 25, 2017 can never justify highly disproportionate military response, widespread human rights abuses, and atrocity crimes on a particular ethnic community," said the foreign ministry.

Bangladesh has reaffirmed that there are no ARSA activities at Rohingya camps.

"It's not possible to operate terrorist bases anywhere in Bangladesh because of high alertness and effective preventive measures by the security forces in line with "zero-tolerance policy" of the present government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina," the ministry said.

Bangladesh has taken adequate measures to ensure that the potential returnees are able to express their views on return without any influence or threat from any quarter.

Dhaka said the Myanmar government was yet to demonstrate any political will to implement the provisions of bilateral instruments and to address the underlying political, economic, security, and social causes rooted in the problem.

Inordinate delay in verification of past residency of Rohingyas with arbitrary rejection of substantial number of displaced people as "not included in the registered list of household" and excessive focus on technicalities are clear manifestations of Myanmar's utter reluctance to resolve the crisis through dialogue and negotiation, it added.

The claim has been substantiated through their failure to effectively dismantle the IDP camps in Rakhine and resettle the people to the places of their origin or places of their choice, as well as taking back the people sheltered at the international boundary (zero line) as they require no involvement of the government of Bangladesh, said the foreign ministry.

'NON-COOPERATION'

Myanmar often complains against Bangladesh for "non-cooperation in repatriation". Dhaka said such accusation was totally baseless and it could be guided by an ulterior motive.

86-yr-old finally gets acquitted in arms case

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rabeya Khatun, an 86-year-old woman from Manikganj who had been visiting the Dhaka judge court premises for justice for last 17 years, has finally been acquitted in an arms case filed in 2002.

The High Court yesterday scrapped the trial proceeding against Rabeya, the woman from Samipur village in Daulatpur upazila of Manikganj, in the case. The court also expressed dissatisfaction at the trial court judge and its assistant public prosecutor (APP) for their incompetence and negligence in properly handling the case.

The court told Md Al Mamun, judge of Dhaka Metropolitan Special Tribunal-2, and its APP Shahabuddin that the case against Rabeya had reached this level due to their incompetence and negligence, which is very unfortunate.

The HC bench of Justice Jahangir Hossain Selim and Justice Md Riaz Uddin Khan also asked them to be careful so that such incident does not take place in future.

The bench delivered the verdict after hearing a rule issued by this court earlier about cancellation of the trial proceedings against Rabeya.

Supreme Court lawyer Ashraful Alam Nobel filed a petition with the HC in April this year following a news report saying that Rabeya Khatun had been suffering as she needed to appear before the trial court in the connection with the case for the last 17 years.

Following the petition, the HC on

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Eight arrested for rape in 4 dists

STAR REPORT

Eight men were arrested over rape incidents across the country yesterday.

Three of them were arrested on charge of gang-raping a woman in Laxmipur, while another was arrested for allegedly raping his daughter in Narayanganj.

Two others in Sonargaon upazila were arrested for allegedly gang-raping a woman.

A man was arrested in a case filed over raping a minor girl in Chattogram and another in Jashore was arrested on charge of raping a girl with a learning disability.

The arrestees in Laxmipur were identified as Billal Hossain, 30, Alauddin, 21, and Billal Hossain, 25. They are residents of Ramgoti upazila's Chameyamot village.

Police said the victim's husband used to work at a furniture shop at Alexander Bazar. The victim went there to look for him on Tuesday evening, said police quoting her.

At one stage, she was introduced to Billal, who told her he would take her to her husband. Later at night, Billal took the woman to one of his friends' houses, where she was raped by five persons, including Billal.

Later yesterday, the victim filed a case against the rapists. Three of them have already been arrested, while police are conducting drives to arrest the rest, said Arichul Haque, officer-in-charge.

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Passengers suffer as Air Asia flight delayed for 24hrs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Around 144 passengers of Air Asia had to suffer an around 24-hour delay due to a technical glitch yesterday, sources at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport said.

Among 144 passengers, there were several Bangladeshi migrant workers who were scheduled to go to Brunei through a connecting flight.

Due to delay, the workers and several other passengers failed to reach their destinations in Malaysia and Brunei, Kamrun Nahar, a passenger, told The Daily Star.

The Malaysia-based budget airlines Air Asia flight AK-70 was scheduled to take off from HSI for Malaysia around 12:30am yesterday.

The aircraft -- Airbus 320 -- was kept waiting for long after the authorities completed all formalities and got the passengers on board the aircraft.

The cabin crew first blamed the airport authorities for the delay but after around an hour, the pilot requested the passengers to disembark.

The airlines authorities later arranged accommodation for the passengers at different nearby hotels.

Kamrun Nahar said she was scheduled to attend an international seminar in Malaysia, but missed it due to the long delay.

As per the rescheduled time, the flight was likely to take off at around 12:35am today, sources at the airport said.

Air Asia started operating flights from Dhaka in 2015. It operates seven flights in a week on the Dhaka-Malaysia route.

Officials of Air Asia at the HSI were not available for comments.