



Sahab Uddin stands on the reconstructed Sholabaria Bridge in Pabna's Sujanagar upazila. He took part in the operation when the bridge was blown up on December 5 in 1971.

PHOTO: STAR

Sahab, a forgotten fighter

MD MIZANUR RAHMAN HIMADRI, back from Pabna

On a spring afternoon a few days ago, an old man, standing beside a tree older than him, started sharing vignettes of the Liberation War, when the country was resisting one of the worst genocides of the world 49 years ago.

The man, SM Sahab Uddin, a valiant freedom fighter (FF) hailing from Pabna's Sujanagar, is yet to get official recognition nor government facilities meant for the FFs.

In the twilight years of life, he is now struggling to maintain the family, alongside bearing the treatment cost of his mentally challenged son and daughter.

In early April 1971, Pakistani army on four launches came to Nagarbari ghat. Equipped mostly with local weapons, Sahab along with other freedom loving people tried to resist the enemy but retreated in the face of heavy bombardment.

Later a group of 20/22 youths, including Sahab, took training from Abdus Samad, local

chief of Mujib Bahini in Sujanagar, and joined his company as guerrilla fighters.

Sahab took part in the operation on the midnight of December 5, when Sholabaria Bridge beside Pabna-Nagarbari highway in Sujanagar was blown up to snap road communication for Pakistani army, said Samad. "Around 50 Pakistani armoured vehicles were moving forward Sujanagar Police Station on the night of December 12. We took position in Mothurapur area and exchanged fires with the enemy for four days," Sahab said.

"In early morning of December 17, we launched a heavy attack on the police station and forced the Pakistani army to flee," he said.

In 1973, Sahab built a school at Ahmedpur with the help of Samad and the then lawmaker Tofiz Uddin and named it Shaheed Saronika Bohumukhi High School in honour of the Liberation War martyrs, from where he retired in 2010 as an assistant teacher.

All of the retirement money was spent on

the treatment of their mentally challenged son and daughter, said Sahab's wife Aleya Begum, adding that her husband is now struggling to run the family as a marginal farmer.

"Of my three other sons, one is a tailor and another works as a school peon while the last one has been seeking job for the last four years after graduation from Sylhet Engineering College," Aleya said, adding that her elder daughter got married.

"In 2009, we submitted a prayer to Jatiya Muktiyoddha Council through post office to enlist Sahab as a freedom fighter but we were later informed that the authorities did not accept the application on the grounds that due process was not followed," she said.

Dr Mohi Uddin, chief scientific officer of Bangladesh Agriculture Research Institute, said, "Sahab is one of my favourite teachers who has great contribution in building my career but it is very sad that even 49 years after independence, the war hero is yet to be recognised as a freedom fighter."

Anger simmers in parts of India

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over to nearby posh South Delhi locality New Friends Colony. Protesters also blocked tracts of the Delhi-Mathura road, which is opposite to the colony.

Delhi has been witnessing protests against the law for the last four days but violence was witnessed for the first time yesterday.

Our New Delhi correspondent adds: demonstrators gathered outside the old Delhi Police Headquarters in central Delhi to protest the force's handling of the situation after an agitation against the new citizenship law near the university turned violent.

They torched several vehicles near the university and clashed with police. Later, police entered the university to control the situation and said they detained some of the people who were allegedly involved in violence.

The protesters raised anti-police slogans outside the headquarters in ITO area, after a call for it was given by the Jawaharlal Nehru University Students Union.

Other students' bodies endorsed the protest call.

The Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) administration last night announced the closure of the institution till January 5 in the wake of clashes broke out between police and students protesting against the amended Citizenship Act near the campus gate.

"The university is closed from today [yesterday] till January 5. This is being done due to disturbances created by some anti-social elements for the last three days," said AMU Registrar Abdul Hamid.

Another protester succumbed to his injuries yesterday taking the toll in Thursday's violent street clashes in Guwahati, Assam, to four, media reports said.

While a youth, who received bullet wounds in Guwahati on December 12, succumbed yesterday, the driver of an oil tanker, who sustained burn injuries when his vehicle was set on fire in Sonitpur, died on Saturday.

Two persons were killed in police firing on violent mob in Guwahati on Thursday.

The mob was protesting the changed citizenship law that seeks to give Indian nationality to non-Muslims from Bangladesh, Afghanistan, and Pakistan.

Curfew was relaxed for several hours from 9:00am to 6:00pm in Guwahati and from 7:00am

to 4:00pm in Dibrugarh west, Naharkatia, Tenughat and some other places in the district yesterday, officials said.

Some 5,000 people took part in a fresh demonstration in Guwahati yesterday, with hundreds of police watching as they sang, chanted and carried banners with the words "long live Assam", reports AFP.

Activists of the Guwahati unit of Bharatiya Janata Party's Assam ally the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) yesterday held demonstrations outside party headquarters in Ambari area of Guwahati demanding the resignation of three ministers, including party president Atul Bora.

AGP lawmakers in parliament had voted in favour of the contentious law. The party has now decided to approach the Supreme Court against the law.

All-Assam Students Union and Assam Jatiya Chhatra Parishad took out rallies across the state, seeking revocation of the amended law, reports our New Delhi correspondent.

The street protests against the amended citizenship law will remain in firm focus when West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee leads a march in Kolkata today and the day after as part of her party Trinamool Congress' agitation against the legislation.

The law seems to have brought traditional political rivals in Kerala -- ruling CPI(M)-led Left Democratic Front and the Congress-spearheaded United Democratic Front multi-party alliances -- where the two sides are likely to hold a joint protest meeting in Thiruvananthapuram today.

The opposition attack on the amended citizenship law went up a few notches on Saturday when former Congress President Rahul Gandhi, addressing a rally in New Delhi, alleged that the BJP and Prime Minister Narendra Modi have set the entire north east region on fire and states like Assam, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura were "burning."

"He [Modi] has burnt all these places. He divides people and works towards weakening the country," Rahul charged.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday accused the Congress and its allies of raising a storm over citizenship law and asserted that the opposition parties were behind the unrest and arson in

parts of the country.

Home Minister Amit Shah assured that the concerns of Meghalaya regarding the citizenship law will be looked into, the state's Chief Minister Conrad Sangma said yesterday. Meghalaya is one of the northeastern states which have been witnessing widespread protests over the law, reports NDTV.

Kerala and West Bengal are among the five states whose chief ministers Pinarayi Vijayan and Mamata Banerjee have already declared their state governments will not implement the amended citizenship law passed by parliament and assented to by President Ram Nath Kovind.

However, constitution experts unanimously hold that states have no option other than implementing a law passed by national parliament.

Woman killed

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a helmet before starting his motorcycle.

Neither of them had any clue about the impending disaster that would take the mother's life and leave the son a hapless witness.

Around 2:50pm, when the motorcycle reached near Farmgate footbridge, a bus of Airport Bangabandhu Avenue Paribahan rearended them at speed, said Shamim.

He along with the bike fell on the left-side of the road while Sakhina on the other side.

The bus did not stop, rather it hit Sakhina, fallen on the road, he said.

Shamim said he had shouted at the driver "Stop ... stop" but it did not.

The bus crushed the helmet under its wheels, and dragged his mother around 20 feet leaving her dead on the spot.

Jahedul, an eyewitness, said had the driver stopped the vehicle immediately, she would have survived.

Sakhina, wife of freedom fighter Subedar Sundar Ali of Brahmanbaria, resided at the capital's Khilkhet.

Police held Shah Alam, 49, the driver of the bus, said Hasanat Khandakar, inspector (operations) of Tejgaon Police Station.

The helper of the vehicle, however, managed to flee, he said.

The body was sent to Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College Morgue for an autopsy.

5 more workers

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Daily Star.
About the seriously injured patients at the institute and burn unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital, burn units' Coordinator Samanta Lal Sen said, "Their condition is very critical. We are trying our best."

The factory had only one gate and there was no emergency exit, fire officials and survivors said.

Another victim Suman was on leave on Wednesday. The factory manager called him and asked him to join work. He went inside the factory about 10 minutes before the fire broke out, said his elder brother Saidul Islam.

"We request the government to take steps so that no one dies due to negligence again," he added.

Abu Sayed joined the factory as a worker two-and-half month ago to support his five-member family, said his uncle Mohammad Rubel.

"He was the breadwinner," Rubel added.

Firefighters and survivors said the factory had been operating without permission for years.

Locals alleged that the authorities concerned turned a blind eye to the lack of safety measures at the factory even though it had been there for around 10 years and had witnessed two other fire incidents this year alone.

In death ends

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police," he said.

Sabirul Alom, officer-in-charge of Khalishpur Police Station, said he heard about the death news of a jute mill worker.

He, however, said he did not know if the worker fell sick during the hunger strike.

Earlier on Thursday, another worker of the same jute mill -- Abdur Sattar -- died while observing the hunger strike.

After four days had passed and around 100 workers fell sick due to the hunger strike, State Minister for Labour and Employment Munnujan Sufian on Saturday held a meeting with them.

The workers then suspended their work abstention programme for three days.

Around 31,000 jute mill workers of nine state-run jute mills in Khulna-Jashore industrial belt started protesting on Tuesday to press home their 11-point demand.

The demands include payment of regular wages, cancellation of public-private ownership, necessary fund for jute sector, insurance for families of deceased workers, provident fund and gratuity facility for retired workers and regularisation of temporary workers.

CLASH OVER DISPUTED LAND

Man shot dead, 10 hurt

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

A man was killed and at least 10 others were injured in a clash between two groups of rival villagers over taking possession of a disputed land in Sunamganj's Derai upazila yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Amir Uddin, 45, of Kaldhar village in the upazila.

The injured are now undergoing treatment at Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital.

Quoting locals, police said there had been a longstanding rivalry between Faruk Miah and Marom Ali of the village over the ownership of a disputed land.

As a sequel to the conflict, supporters of Marom attacked Faruk's men yesterday morning that triggered the clash.

At one stage, Faruk's supporters opened fire on their rivals that left Amir dead and 10 others injured.

Officer in Charge of Derai Police Station KM Nazrul Islam said, being informed, they recovered Amir's body and sent it to Sunamganj Sadar Hospital for autopsy.

Housewife takes own life

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

A young housewife took her own life allegedly over a family feud in Baufal upazila on Saturday.

The deceased, Kamrunnahar alias Kona, 20, was daughter of Abul Kalam of Kowkhali village.

Deceased's family members said Kona, an Intermediate first year student at Dr Yakub Ali Sharif Degree College in the upazila, was married to Bellal Sikder, 24, a police constable, about one and a half years ago.

On Saturday, Kona had an altercation with Bellal over phone allegedly over his extra marital affair with another girl.

At one stage, she hanged herself from the ceiling of a room at her father's house, police quoted family members as saying.

OMS dealer jailed in

Thakurgaon

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

A mobile court here yesterday sentenced a dealer to seven days imprisonment for selling OMS (open market sale) onions in black market.

The convict, Ashrafur Islam, 35, son of Asir Uddin, is a resident of Ruhea village in Thakurgaon Sadar upazila.

Thakurgaon Sadar Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Abdullah Al Mamun said 22 OMS dealers have started selling onion at Tk 52 per kg at as many points in Sadar upazila under direct supervision of the upazila administration.

Following complaints, filed by local consumers, a mobile court led by the UNO conducted a drive in Bus Stand Bazar area yesterday morning and detained Ashrafur.

They also found Ashrafur guilty of selling the onion at black market and handed down the punishment.

Dhaka seeks

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there were job shortages in India, which may be why some were entering Bangladesh.

At least 329 people were arrested on charges of trespassing into Bangladesh from India in November and sent to the district jails in Jhenaidah and Jashore. The arrestees claimed to be Bangladeshis, but could not provide any evidence to support their claims.

"If they are not Bangladeshi citizens, we will send them back," Momen said and added if they were Bangladeshi, they had the right to come to Bangladesh.

The statements come when the National Register of Citizenship in Assam has excluded more than 19.96 million persons. Those excluded can go to courts to prove that they are citizens, but what happens if they fail to do so is not clear.

Dhaka and Delhi in formal meetings said NRC is India's internal issue and won't affect Bangladesh.

Foreign Minister Momen also repeated that Dhaka raised the NRC issue with New Delhi a number of times and was assured that it would in no manner affect Bangladesh.

Indian Home Minister and ruling BJP President Amit Shah, however, on various occasions said NRC would be implemented all across India and the illegal migrants would be identified and deported.

Asked on Amit Shah's remarks, Momen said, "We will trust the Indian government. We don't trust in what any person says. Individuals may say many things for political reasons."

On Shah's recent remarks in the parliament that minorities were persecuted in Bangladesh, the minister said that Amit Shah specifically said that there was no persecution of minorities during the regimes of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the Awami League.

"Before that, when there was a military-government or other governments, there was some level of persecution against the minorities. And, that is true...even in 2001, the Awami League and minorities faced persecution," he added.

Amit Shah's remarks came last week before passage of the Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB) which would grant Indian citizenship to Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis, and Christians "who faced persecution" in Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The bill triggered demonstrations in India, especially in the northeastern states.

Against this backdrop, Abdul Momen and Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan cancelled their trips to India, triggering speculation that these were signs of

rough patches in the Indo-Bangla relationship.

Momen refuted this, saying he had other domestic issues, especially the celebrations of December 14 Martyred Intellectuals Day and Victory Day on December 16. Besides, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam and senior foreign ministry officials are also out of the country.

Home ministry officials said Asaduzzaman cancelled the trip due to instability in the northeast.

Asked if cancellation of the visit would impact Indo-Bangla relations, Momen said, "Our relationship is normal... very normal. So, we don't have any special concern over it. Bangladesh-India relationship now is the sweetest, best relationship."

Meanwhile, during a programme at the Awami League's office in the city, the party General Secretary Obaidul Quader said Dhaka and Delhi would solve any problems, if any, and don't want any crisis over the friendly relations between the two countries.

BANGLADESH HOPES MYANMAR WILL BE MORE TOLERANT

Momen also said Bangladesh expects Myanmar will be more tolerant towards the Rohingyas after the case at the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

"My expectation is that Myanmar will also be quick and sincere in implementing the bilateral deal that it signed with Bangladesh on repatriating the Rohingya," he said, adding that there are signs Myanmar is shifting from their previous stance.

"They have invited me to visit Myanmar. These are good initiatives," Momen said, adding that he, however, asked Myanmar to come to Bangladesh and talk to the Rohingyas to persuade them to return to Rakhine.

"That's how the repatriation would be easy," Momen said.

He said the hearing of the case of the Rohingya genocide at the ICJ has globally established that there were horrendous crimes against the Rohingyas in Rakhine.

Asked why Bangladesh Army Chief General Aziz Ahmed visited Myanmar when the ICJ hearing was going on, Momen said the schedule for that was made much earlier and had no relations to the ICJ hearing.

"We feel good that another channel of communication has opened. This is good for our country."

"Myanmar is our friend, not our enemy. If there are more channels of communication, it is good for us," he said, adding, "As Myanmar's army has a special status... this type of communication is much better."

Govt making

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forward the armed forces to make them stronger and more time-befitting by formulating the Forces Goal-2030 in light of the defence policy adopted by the Father of the Nation. "We've been working to collect modern military hardware and arranging trainings," she said.

"The world is changing constantly. So, we'll have to move keeping pace with the change," Hasina added.

She said her government had been procuring the latest military hardware and arranging proper trainings for the Armed Forces personnel so that they could be familiar with modern war equipment used in UN peacekeeping missions and so that they do not hesitate to play their role under any circumstance.

NDC Commandant Lt Gen Sheikh Mamun Khaled delivered the welcome speech.

A total of 85 officers from the armed forces, civil administration and foreign military forces successfully completed the

NDC Course 2019 while 38 the AFWC-2019 at the NDC.

Of the 85 NDC graduates, there are military officers from 16 foreign countries, including China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Malaysia, Nepal, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, the UK, Mali and Niger.

Pointing at fresh graduates, she said the participants carried out studies and research over different important issues of the State as well as acquired knowledge over different problems and work plans of the governance of the State.

"I believe the prudent application of knowledge will undoubtedly have contribution to the national progress of Bangladesh," said the PM.

She said foreign military officers from 24 friendly-countries have so far received higher training in the college. "You (foreign graduates) will be our (Bangladesh's) goodwill ambassadors as you stayed here and have been able to know Bangladesh for last one year," she said.