

VIOLENCE IN NOAKHALI Freedom fighter, Mirza sued in two cases

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

Two cases were filed with a speedy trial tribunal in Noakhali yesterday in connection with violence in Companiganj upazila on March 8 accusing a freedom fighter and Basurhat municipality mayor Quader Mirza.

One of the cases was lodged by Arjuman Parveen, wife of freedom fighter Khizir Hayat Khan, who is the president of Companiganj Awami League.

In the case statement, Parveen alleged that Mirza, the younger brother of ruling AL General Secretary Obaidul Quader, along with his supporters attacked Khizir at an office in Basurhat's Rupali Chattar area on March 8 afternoon.

The attackers assaulted Khizir, leaving him seriously injured. They also tore his clothes, alleged Parveen.

The case was filed against 97 named accused, including Mirza, and some 56 to 60 unnamed accused, said plaintiff's lawyer Harunur Rashid Hawlader.

The other case was filed against Khizir and his followers.

Iqbal Hossain Swapan, a member of Companiganj upazila unit Sramik League and also a supporter of Mirza, lodged the case accusing 196 named persons, including Khizir, and some 50 to 60 unnamed ones.

In the case statement, Swapan alleged that a group of people, led by Khizir and the upazila unit AL Organizing Secretary Mizanur Rahman Badal, attacked Mirza and his supporters while they were in a meeting at Basurhat city unit AL office at Rupali Chattar on March 8 afternoon.

After accepting both the cases, the tribunal's Senior Judicial Magistrate directed Companiganj Police Station Officer-in-Charge (OC) Mir Jahidul Haque Rony to investigate the incidents and submit probe reports before the court within 10 working days.

Contacted, Mirza and Khizir blamed each other for the incident.



Watermelons are piled up at a shop in Dobash Math of Kotwali in Chattogram yesterday. Favourable weather allowed farmers to produce a good quantity of the fruit this season. Depending on the size, each of them were being sold between Tk 15 and Tk 60.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

BCS exam to be on schedule

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Shahriar Ahmed, a graduate of DU's English department, said, "All major recruitment exams are closed due to coronavirus. Our age is passing, so we want the exam to take place."

A RISK 'WITH SUCH A LARGE NUMBER OF CANDIDATES'

A member of the Covid-19 National Technical Advisory Committee and former BSMMU Vice-Chancellor Dr Nazrul Islam told The Daily Star yesterday, "Covid-19 fatalities and infections are increasing. So, there is a risk of holding the exam with such a large number of candidates."

Around 4.75 lakh candidates applied for the exam after the 41st BCS circular was published in November

2019 to appoint 2,018 vacant posts in different cadres.

Among the 41st BCS candidates, 211,000 are from Dhaka, 37,000 from Rajshahi, 35,000 from Chattogram, 32,000 from Rangpur, 28,000 from Mymensingh, 16,000 from Sylhet, and 12,000 from Barishal, among others.

Among the 351 centres in seven divisions, there are many centres where 3,000-4,000 candidates will sit for the exam.

According to the public health expert, managing these numbers is a big challenge.

"But if PSC thinks they must hold the exam, they must follow the health

guidelines. Candidates have to follow the hygiene rules from the time of entry to the time of exit; everything -- sanitising, masks -- is needed," said Dr Nazrul Islam.

Former secretary and PSC member Shahjahan Ali Mollah, in charge of conducting the 41st BCS exam, told The Daily Star yesterday the exam will be held in strict compliance with the hygiene rules.

"We have given 11-point instructions this [Tuesday] evening. Everyone has to come to the centre wearing a mask and can pass inside by having their temperature measured. If someone's temperature is high, they will be taken to a separate room.

Seats have been arranged according to distance.

"We are doing everything according to the instructions given by the Ministry of Health. We hope the situation is under control and we are ready to take on the challenge, and we don't have any other way of taking the exam," he added.

In addition to the 41st BCS preliminary exam, the viva exam of the 40th BCS is currently underway, the special 42nd BCS preliminary results have not yet been published, and the application process for the 43rd BCS is underway.

Shariful Hasan is a freelance journalist.

Fateful talks

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separately draw up constitutions for the respective wings, and thereafter, they should sit together to make a constitution for Pakistan; eastern wing should make provisions for autonomy on the basis of the Six-Point demand, and in the western wing the provinces would have autonomy to the extent provided to a province under the 1962 Constitution; the Centre will retain additional powers.

Justice Cornelius suggested that a provisional constitution should be brought into force through a resolution of the National Assembly. It was also suggested that the advisers of both sides should sit in plenary meeting with Bangabandhu and Yahya to decide on the basic guidelines based on which the provisional instrument would be drafted. [Kamal Hossain, Bangladesh: Question for Freedom and Justice, UPL, 2013, pg.93]

'GET READY'

On the evening of March 17, Yaha Khan summoned General Tikka Khan to the President's House. He reportedly told Tikka that Mujib was not "behaving".

"You get ready," Yahya added. Subsequently, Tikka Khan rang up Major General Khadim Hussain Raja, then General Officer Commanding of 14 Division in East Pakistan, and asked him to go to the Command House along with Major General Rao Farman Ali, then military adviser to the governor of East Pakistan.

They went there and found that Tikka Khan and General Abdul Hamid Khan, chief of staff of the Pakistan army, were present there. Tikka Khan informed them that the negotiations with Sheikh Mujibur Rahman were not proceeding well and, therefore, the president wanted the military to be ready for action. Khadim and Farman were asked to jointly prepare

a plan which was the blueprint for Operation Searchlight. [Khadim Hussain Raja, A Stranger in My Own Country: East Pakistan (1969-1971), UPL, 2012, 70]

ENQUIRY INTO KILLINGS

At night, the central government's martial law administration announced that an investigation into killings of civilians by soldiers during the ongoing protest in East Pakistan would be carried out. Bangabandhu, in a statement, dismissed the enquiry as "a mere device to mislead the people".

He called on all East Pakistanis not to cooperate with the enquiry "in any respect" as such an inquiry was the least important of several demands that Bangabandhu had said must be met before he would consider attending the assembly session.

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TEESTA WATER-SHARING DEAL

No progress until polls end in West Bengal

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

India has conveyed to Bangladesh that any progress on the long-pending Teesta water-sharing issue will be possible only after the completion of the assembly elections in West Bengal.

This was communicated to Bangladesh yesterday during the talks between the water resources secretaries of Bangladesh and India in New Delhi after Dhaka raised the issue, officials said.

The eight-phased West Bengal polls will end on April 29 and the counting of votes is scheduled for May 2.

The Indian response came after Senior Secretary Kabir Bin Anwar, who led the Bangladesh side in yesterday's meeting, stressed on signing of the interim agreement on sharing of Teesta water as agreed by both the countries in 2011, said a press release issued by the Bangladesh side.

The meeting discussed sharing of waters of six trans-boundary rivers -- the Manu, Muhuri, Khowai, Gumti, Dharala and Dudhkumar -- and conducting a feasibility study jointly by Bangladesh and India for optimum utilisation of the water received by Bangladesh under the provisions of the Ganges water-sharing treaty of


1996. Bangladesh also raised the issue of reduced flow in the Mahananda river due to withdrawal of water in West Bengal.

The meeting further took up the implementation of the October, 2019 MoU signed by the two countries on withdrawal of 16.9 cusec of water from the Feni river by India for drinking purpose in Sabroom town of India's north eastern state Tripura.

The meeting, coming ahead of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Bangladesh on March 26-27, also deliberated on enhancing cooperation in the area of flood forecasting involving the Atrayee, Punarbhaba and Tangon rivers that enter India from Bangladesh, the sources said.

The meeting also discussed issues related to excavation of the remaining portion of intake channel (Rahimpur canal) of the upper Surma-Kushihara project in Bangladesh and pollution in the Titas river through C & B khal and the Janji river in Akhaura of Bangladesh.

Indian Jal Shakti Ministry Secretary Pankaj Kumar led his country's delegation to the meeting.



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US denies HK envoys with virus

AFP, Hong Kong

The United States yesterday accused Chinese state media of publishing "disinformation" about its diplomats in Hong Kong as it denied its staff invoked immunity to avoid isolating after positive coronavirus tests.

Washington temporarily closed its consulate on Monday.

3 aides of PK Halder held

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Islam had prepared the loan proposal without scrutiny. Senior manager Rafsan Riad Chowdhury of NBF examined the proposal and its assistant vice president Al Mamun Sohel forwarded it.

The company's Head of Business Nahida Runai recommended sanctioning the loan. To put up the loan proposal before the board meeting, approval of then ILFSL MD was needed and Rashedul gave the nod, reads the FIR.

On October 25, 2015, the loan was sanctioned as per the approval of ILFSL directors Nasim Anwar, Basudev Banerjee, MA Hashem, and Mizanur Rahman.

Earlier, ACC arrested former chairman of People's Leasing and Financial Services Limited (PLFSL), Uzzal Nandi, and former ILFSL MD Rashedul Haque in connection with the five cases filed in January this year.

In their confessional statements, Rashedul and Uzzal described how

Halder laundered money from the NBFs.

Before joining NRB Global Bank in 2015, Halder was managing director of Reliance Finance.

While he was the managing director, Halder took out money under the disguise of loans from Reliance through at least two dozen non-existent companies created by him. When the pressure mounts for repaying the loan, Halder took out the money from other NBFs.

In some cases, he used part of the funds to repay installments of loans taken against his several fictitious firms.

Halder put his men at the helm of the financial institutions so that he could easily take loans from those and misappropriate the funds.

Meanwhile, a metropolitan magistrate court yesterday granted five-day remand against the three officials of ILFSL, hours after they were arrested.

Mob attacks Jibannagar UNO

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

A mob yesterday attacked SM Munim Lincoln, Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) of Jibannagar in Chuadanga, as he tried to free a tractor that was held by the locals for killing a man.

Police rescued the UNO almost an hour after he was attacked around 12:30pm.

According to locals, Ohidul Biswas, of Bathangachhi village in Maheshpur upazila of Jhenaidah, was riding a bicycle in Jibannagar's Katapole village with his son.

A locally made mud-laden tractor was going on the wrong side of the road and hit the bicycle, leaving Ohidul dead on the spot and his eight-year-old son critically injured.

On information, agitated locals confined the tractor and put a barricade on Jibannagar upazila road.

At one point, UNO Lincoln reached the spot with a police team and tried to calm the crowd. He also asked the locals to release the seized tractor.

As he asked the locals to release the tractor, they chased the UNO and police team and threw brick chunks at them. The UNO was also locked in a house in the area for about an hour.

Local people complained that the soil was being cut illegally from government land and then transported in unlicensed transports like tractors, Nasimon, Karimon etc.

A union parishad member in the area said a number of earth lifters are active in the area. They are continuously lifting soils from canal, river bed and selling to brick kilns.

"But the administration is not paying any heed," he said, seeking anonymity.

Saiful Islam, officer-in-charge of Jibannagar Police Station, said the UNO was taken to Jibannagar Upazila Health Complex. He received first aid there and then went to his residence.

The OC said additional police were deployed in the area.

The Upazila Nirbahi Officer has filed a case against unknown and unnumbered people in the area alleging obstruction of government work.

On the other hand, the family of the dead has filed another case against the tractor driver and helper.

The dead body was sent to Chuadanga Sadar Hospital.

The Daily Star, however, could not reach UNO Lincoln over the phone after repeated attempts.

Rules needed

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decision whether such people against whom inquiries or investigations are underway can go abroad until a law is enacted or rules are framed to this effect.

The HC bench said it will give necessary guidelines in the full text of the verdict later on.

The court came up with the judgment after it heard a writ petition filed by one Ataur Rahman from Narsingdi challenging the ACC's action to restrain him from going abroad as a graft allegation against him was being inquired.

The court declared the ACC's action illegal and allowed Ataur to go to Sweden where he lives with his family.

Deputy Attorney General Sarwar Hossain Bappi told The Daily Star that the ACC issued a notice on August 24, 2020, asking Ataur, known as Sweden Ataur, to submit his wealth statement to the commission.

After he submitted the statement, the anti-graft body started an inquiry into his wealth and on December 20 that year, the commission issued a letter to the immigration police to refrain Ataur from going to Sweden.

Ataur then filed the petition with the HC challenging the ACC's action to prevent him from going abroad, Sarwar said.

Ataur's lawyer Munshi Moniruzzaman told this correspondent that his client runs a business in Sweden.

He has given the details about his asset to the ACC in line with its notice, he said, adding that there is no legal bar to his client to go abroad following the HC verdict.

Lawyer AKM Fazlul Hoque appeared for the ACC.

Govt to rethink

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"More than 1,700 people caught novel coronavirus on Monday, up from 200 to 250 a few days ago. We will need to think afresh if the Covid situation deteriorates."

Khalid said if the pandemic situation gets bad, there will be no scope for holding the Boi Mela, scheduled to be held from March 18 to April 14.

"We are praying that the situation will not be like that," the state minister said.

Earlier in the morning, the Dhaka Metropolitan Police called upon the people to follow the health guidelines properly before entering the book fair venue.

HRW says rebel fire caused Yemen blaze that killed migrants

AFP, Dubai

Human Rights Watch said yesterday that "unidentified projectiles" launched by Yemen's Huthi rebels caused a March 7 blaze that killed dozens of migrants at a holding facility in the capital.

The Iran-backed rebels control much of northern Yemen, including the capital Sanaa, whose capture from the Saudi-backed government in 2014 sparked a devastating war.