

COUNTRYWIDE

Four outlaws get life term for murder in Pabna

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Pabna

A Pabna court yesterday sentenced four operatives of outlawed Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP) for killing a man in Santhia upazila in 2006.

The convicts are Wasim Munshi, 39, of Mohadebpur village, and Mohammad Mostafa, 42, Mirazul Islam, 43, and Shahadat Hossain, 30, of Gobindapur village in the upazila.

Of them, Shahdat and Wasim were present before the court while the other

Criminals abducted Rafikul from the house and later killed him.

two accused were tried in absentia.

District Special Judge Mohammad Ahsan Tarek also fined the convicts Tk 25,000 each.

According to the case statement, Rafikul Islam of village Gobindapur village went to visit his in-laws' house at Sagarkandi village on October, 19, 2006.

The same day, criminals abducted Rafikul from the house and later killed him.

The following day, locals spotted Rafikul's body in a field and informed the police, who sent it to the hospital for autopsy.

Later, a case was filed with Santhia Police Station accusing 25 people on October 26.

After investigation, police submitted the charge-sheet against 23 people.

Slain Rafikul was involved with the outlawed party, Public Prosecutor Advocate Dewan Moznul Haque said.

Fellow outlawed operatives killed Rafikul over previous enmity, he added.

After examining the witnesses and evidences, the delivered the verdict against the four.

The other accused were acquitted from the case as charges brought against them was not proved.



Farm labourers spending busy time harvesting early potatoes. The photo was taken from Kochabari village in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila on Friday.

PHOTO: STAR

EARLY POTATO HARVESTS

Sun shines on farmers of North

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Farmers are making a windfall profit selling early variety of potatoes in different villages of Lalmonirhat and Kurigram.

They are also happy to get the desired yield of potatoes in the region this year thanks to favourable weather and quality seeds.

Farmers said the early variety of potatoes has already been available in the local markets and the price is also good with per kg of potatoes being sold at Tk 25 to Tk 30.

Although the early variety has been being harvested, the sowing of the seeds of late varieties will continue till the first week of February, they added.

Early potatoes were being sold at Tk 65 to Tk 70 per kg only four weeks ago when they hit the markets for the first time, however, the price dropped sharply following the availability of the kitchen

staple, the growers said.

Agriculture office sources said an increasing number of farmers have been cultivating early varieties of potatoes at different villages under five upazilas in Lalmonirhat and nine upazilas in Kurigram. A total of 33,500 hectares

Farmers said although the early variety is being harvested, sowing seeds of late varieties will continue till the first week of February.

of land has been brought under potato cultivation in 14 upazilas of the two districts. Of which, the early variety of potatoes was cultivated on 1,600 hectares of land.

Farmer Afzal Hossain of Nazimkhan village in Kurigram's Rajarhat upazila said he cultivated the early variety potato on

four bighas of land spending Tk 20,000.

"I have already sold 2,600 kgs of early potatoes at the rate of Tk 40 to Tk 30 per kg in the last three weeks and I hope that I will be able to sell 1,400 to 1,500 kgs more within the next week," he said.

Farmer Nagendranath Barmon of Kamlabari village in Lalmonirhat's Aditmari upazila said he has made an excellent profit cultivating early variety potato on his three bighas of land this year.

"I have cultivated early variety of potato on the land after harvesting Aman paddy," Barmon said, adding that he has already earned Tk 65,000 selling early potatoes.

Deputy Director of Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) in Lalmonirhat Shamim Ashraf said a good number of farmers have made windfall profit selling early potatoes.

The agriculture officials provided technical support to the growers, he added.

Smear campaign on by rival

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not write to the city corporation before about the tax being high? It is nothing but an electoral stunt.

"I will say to the city dwellers that if applications are submitted to the corporation to reduce taxes, it can deduct 15 percent tax as per their authority. But I urge them not to be misled by [Taimur's] propaganda."

About the allegations that the corporation has become a syndicated contractors' office, the two-time mayor said, "It's a blatant lie. Without knowing anything, he [Taimur] is telling such lies."

Without mentioning names, Ivy further said, "I contested the election

against an influential candidate in 2011. The complaints made by that person then are the same ones Taimur is making this time."

She added that the government introduced e-tender and anyone can participate in the tender process from anywhere.

"The problem lies with the system – the way the criteria were stipulated in the tender process was that only big contractors get works. I have spoken on this issue on several occasions."

Asked whether she has the Osman family's support in her campaign, she said, "All the grassroots leaders are with me. The Osman family is a part of the Awami League. As Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina gave me the nomination,

they [the Osmans] are also with me.

"Shamim Osman is a lawmaker, he cannot participate in the election campaign but his followers are by my side."

Regarding her relationship with Taimur, she said, "He is my uncle. He was close to my father and watched me grow up. I want to keep our uncle-niece relationship intact in the coming days."

Expressing gratitude, she added, "When he was the BRTC chairman and I was the Narayanganj municipality chairman, I got his cooperation on various occasions. I am grateful to him and want to contest the polls keeping the good relations alive. I will accept whatever the result is."

Philippines widens Covid restrictions

AFF, MANILA

The Philippines will expand coronavirus restrictions in Manila from today to include more than 11 million people living near the capital as cases surge, the government said.

Daily infections have spiked to a two-month high in January and the health department warned of higher caseloads in the coming days following the detection of local cases of the highly contagious Omicron variant of the coronavirus.

Will free office

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secret and it is the people who are the victims."

When asked why people should vote for him, he said he has always been with and for the people throughout his 50-year-long political career. "People want a change and are raising their voices for civic amenities."

"Over the years, the amenities have not been increased but additional taxes were imposed on the city dwellers in different ways – holding tax, trade licence, water tariff... I am contesting the election, as people want a change."

Taimur said the BNP's decision to remove him from the party posts was a blessing as there will be no pressure on him from anyone to withdraw candidacy at the last moment, unlike in the 2011 polls, when he was made to withdraw five hours before election.

He was removed from his posts as he joined the election as an independent candidate in violation of the party's decision to boycott the polls.

Asked about the central

and local BNP leaders' engagement in the polls, he said, "In a local government election, central leaders' presence is not needed. All the local BNP leaders are with me and regularly campaigning for me."

Expressing concern that some ruling party leaders are making provocative comments on the election, Taimur said if the government does not resort to any "election engineering", it will be peaceful.

"I will not violate any electoral code of conduct. I hope the government and administration will enforce the [electoral] code without prejudice."

About his opponents, he said, "I will not make any comment on any contender. All the contenders are equal to me. Ivy is my niece. Chunka bhai [Ivy's father] was my leader. I respect him and have learned a lot from him."

"The fact that the office should not be in the grip of contractors is something I learned from Chunka bhai and I will follow it."

Biman slashes fares

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Bangladesh and its neighbouring countries for Riyadh, he said the fare for the Colombo-Riyadh route is Tk 38,000, while airfare for the Mumbai-Riyadh route is around Tk 32,000.

On the other hand, a Bangladeshi passenger needs to spend around Tk 80,000 to Tk 85,000 to go

to Riyadh, said Fakhrul.

Association of Travel Agents of Bangladesh and leaders of recruiting agencies recently demanded operating additional flights to Middle Eastern destinations by Biman and other concerned airlines so that airfare could be brought back to normal rates.

They'd better talk

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Supreme Court lawyer Md Abdullah Al Harun Russell filed the writ petition as a public interest litigation to the HC on Sunday.

On December 22, three men raped a tourist while their cohorts took her husband and child hostage.

The woman, her husband, and their eight-month-old child went to Cox's Bazar on holiday from the capital, according to case documents. A total of six people have been arrested so far in connection with the case.

Meanwhile, tourist police in Cox's Bazar arrested Mehedi Hasan Babu, 27 – a named accused in the gang rape case – from Khuruskul

area of Cox's Bazar Sadar upazila yesterday.

All seven named accused in the case has now been arrested.

"With arrest of Babu, we have arrested all the accused in the case," Mohiuddin Ahmed, additional police super of Cox's Bazar zone told The Daily Star yesterday. Ruhul Amin, investigation officer of the case, told The Daily Star that they sought seven days' remand for Ashikul Islam Ashik, 28, the main accused of the case and chief judicial magistrate of Cox's Bazar granted three days.

Other accused were remanded and quizzed but none gave any confessional statement, police said.

Experts worry about new Covid

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had been discovered, that did not necessarily mean IHU will prove as infectious as other strains.

In the analysis, the authors found "46 mutations" which had not been spotted in other countries, nor labelled a variant under investigation by the WHO.

The genomes were obtained by next-generation sequencing. The authors claimed that the person who was identified with the IHU variant, was fully-vaccinated. The person tested positive after returning from a three-day trip to Cameroon.

The authors of the research paper said "subsequent detection... of

three mutations in the spike gene to screen for variants... did not correspond to the pattern of the Delta variant involved in almost all SARS-CoV-2 infections at that time".

Arguing that the emln a long Twitter thread, epidemiologist and a fellow at Federation of American Scientists, Eric Feigl-Ding said the new variant was being monitored.

"There are scores of new variants discovered all the time, but it does not necessarily mean they will be more dangerous."

"What makes a variant more well-known and dangerous is its ability to multiply because of the number of mutations it has in relation to the original

Bolsonaro will not have surgery

AFF, SAO PAULO

Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro will not need surgery, his doctors said yesterday, a day after the far-right leader was rushed to the hospital with a partially blocked intestine.

"President Jair Messias Bolsonaro's intestinal subocclusion has been eliminated, with no need for surgery," the Vila Nova Star hospital in Sao Paulo said in a statement.

"The patient is making satisfactory progress in both clinical evaluations and laboratory exams, and will begin a liquid diet today."

Residents in Faridpur town face erosion threat

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

About a hundred families of Khabaspur Karalpara area in Faridpur town are passing days in panic as sudden erosion by the Kumar river has devoured homesteads and fresh areas within couple of days.

Locals said last week three concrete houses with several rooms, kitchen and toilets went to the river bed within a span of two days.

Suddenly erosion by the Kumar river, flowing along parts of the town, started in the early morning of December 26.

They said within a span of only two days about one kilometre area, stretching from one Nani Biswas's house to Samsul Ulum Madrasa, was devoured by the river.

Besides, three tin-shed concrete houses belonging to late Khabir Hawladar, Nurul Islam and Abdur Razzk were either completely or partially washed away due to the sudden erosion.

During a visit to the area this correspondent saw numerous cracks have been developed on vast areas along the bank of the river which poses serious erosion treat to nearby around one hundred houses and cropland on the north side.

Of them, house of at least 40 families are at high risk of being eroded anytime.

Housewife Sathi Akter said, "The sudden erosion started on December 26 and devoured our three living houses, kitchen and two bathrooms by December 28."

