



Contrasting flavours in BPL's return

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

After a two-year hiatus due to Covid-19, the eighth edition of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) began yesterday with two matches of totally different flavours in Mirpur.

While impressive bowling figures by skipper Shakib Al Hasan inspired Fortune Barishal to a four-wicket victory over Chattogram Challengers in a low-scoring contest, Khulna Tigers won an encounter filled with power-hitting by five wickets over Minister Group Dhaka.

Led by Shakib's one for nine in four overs, Barishal restricted Chattogram to a modest 125 for eight before the batters chased it down with eight balls to spare in the day game.

In the night match, Khulna chased down Dhaka's total of 183 for six with an over to spare.



Fortune Barishal skipper Shakib Al Hasan is overjoyed after trapping Chattogram Challengers batter Sabbir Rahman plumb in front during their clash in the Bangabandhu Bangladesh Premier League opener in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

JAILED MILITANTS

Prisons not preventing their activities

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Prison seems to have deterred militants little as they are continuing with their malicious activities with the help of a section of unscrupulous guards.

Due to the company they keep, some inmates have also become more radical in prison than they were when they were outside.

From holding meetings, propagating their ideology, recruiting members, issuing directives to activists over the phone to providing financial support to families of arrested members, they are doing it all from behind bars, said police officials. More worryingly, the prison guards helping the inmates are not doing it for money, they are doing it for ideological reasons, they added.

A recent intelligence report, a copy of which this paper has, said 13 prison guards were found working for militant outfits. The guards provide inmates with phones and carry messages, the report said.

As many as 1,963 militant suspects were arrested between January 2016 and August 2021, according to the Police Headquarters.

Officials said some who got arrested for their links to radical websites or for sharing radical thoughts on social media became fully-fledged members of militant outfits in prison.

Abdulla Al Noman, who is in his mid-20s, turned into a key militant leader inside prison.

He used to share and like radical content on social media. He was arrested in a case filed under the terrorism act in 2018 and was behind bars for 15 months during which he met some militants.

Getting out on bail, he got in touch with the then Neo JMB chief Abu Mohammad.

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As per Abu's instruction, Noman learnt to make Improvised Explosive Devices (IED) and planted an IED at a police box in Paltan on July 24, 2020.

He was arrested again on November 5 last year.

On March 30 last year, the detective branch arrested two JMB men and learnt that JMB, Neo-JMB and Huji had formed a unified platform for sending and receiving information and goods in the prison, police claimed.

Rahmat Ullah Chowdhury, in-charge of CTC bomb disposal unit, told The Daily Star that they were closely monitoring the

outfits' supporters after they get out of prison.

Meanwhile, another intelligence report was sent to the directorate of prison recently requesting action against two prison guards for their alleged involvement in militant outfits, sources told this paper.

Col Md Abrar Hossain, additional inspector general of prisons, said they have received the report.

"Since it requires verification and proof, we conduct a thorough enquiry before taking action," he said.

Md Moniruzzaman, additional deputy inspector general of the Anti-Terrorism Unit, said they have not been able to start the inmate de-radicalisation programmes due to the pandemic. He said it had to be done in person with help of Islamic scholars.

Chief of CTC unit Md Asaduzzaman said they sent a letter to the prisons authorities about monitoring the situation but they were yet to get any response.

Sources said the letter was sent on October 28 last year.

Col Abrar said they received the letter from the police. A joint team would be formed to monitor militant activities in prison, he said.

"Now, we are closely monitoring militant suspects and keeping an eye on other inmates so that no one gets in touch with the extremists."



Teenage depression WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR AND HOW TO HELP

STAR HEALTH DESK

Depression is more than just a feeling of being sad for a short period. Among teens, depression can cause a persistent feeling of sadness and loss of interest in activities and it can control thoughts and behaviour.

According to Johns Hopkins All Children's Hospital, around one in 20 teenagers around the world suffer depression. Suicide, the most serious risk in depression, is one of the leading causes of deaths in people aged 15-24, it said.

Depression can occur at any time in life but its symptoms in teens may be different than those seen in adults.

The signs and symptoms include feeling hopeless, being irritable, conflict with family and friends, low self-esteem, feelings of worthlessness or guilt, fixation on past failures or exaggerated self-blame or self-criticism, extreme sensitivity to rejection

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It's the US that trained Rab: Momen

UNB, Dhaka

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen yesterday said that it is the United States that trained Rab on their rules of engagement, how to behave with people and how to interrogate.

"They've been trained by the US. The US has taught them the rules of engagement, how to behave with people and how to interrogate," he told journalists after attending a number of programmes, recalling the role of the US and the UK in training the Rab.

Momen said Rab is very efficient and effective in its work.

"They're very efficient and they're not corrupt. That's why they've been able to gain people's trust."

The minister said that the government would definitely encourage Rab to go and take training afresh if they (Rab members) have any weaknesses in the rules of engagement and if there were any

human rights violations in these rules of engagement.

But the sections that have been imposed on individuals suddenly are not very justified, he said, adding that the US got one-sided information.

The government remains open to sharing experience, revisiting some aspects of the US and UK trained Rab's rules of engagement and their training on human rights in handling the crimes.

Momen said terrorist activities in the country have decreased because of Rab and in the last few years, there has been no more terrorist activity in the country after the Holey Artisan incident.

"This has been possible because of Rab. The US Department of State itself has acknowledged it. There're some people who don't like the law and order in the country. Those who like terrorism or drugs don't like Rab because Rab also acts against them. It's very sad," he added.

Levee repair delay leaves farmers edgy

DWOHA CHOWDHURY, back from Sunamganj

Hundreds of farmers in Sunamganj are in fear of losing their Boro paddy to floods as the authorities concerned are delaying the repair of levees.

In this haor region, the government every year does the work to protect the major crop of the low-lying district from floods.

In March 2017, an early flood devastated the north-eastern haor region of the country and the Sunamganj farmers lost Boro paddy on around 1,13,000 hectares.

After finding negligence of officials of Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB), its contractors and Project Implementation Committees (PICs), the government initiated 'Kabita (Kajer Binimoye Taka) Rules 2017', a reform in policy that put PICs under control of government officials.

Under the policy, no contractor is awarded any work relating to construction or restoration of levees in haor areas.

According to the policy, all PICs must be formed by November 30 of a year, the repair work is to start by December 15 and to be completed by February 28.

This year, the government again delayed for weeks to start the restoration work of the levees.

According to the BWDB in Sunamganj, 52km of levees have to be restored in 40 haors of the district this year. To complete the work, the district committee for restoring the levees approved 720 schemes at the cost of Tk 118 crore.

However, only 690 PICs were formed as of yesterday and around 30 percent work of the schemes started, said Md Shamsuddoha, executive engineer of Sunamganj BWDB.

He said the survey work on the levees had been completed before the stipulated time, but the PIC formation was delayed.

This correspondent recently visited Dharmapasha, Madhyhanagar and Tahirpur upazilas.

Talking to The Daily Star, farmer Abul Hossain, of Kauhani village in Madhyhanagar upazila, said, "Since 2017, we have been living in fear of losing our precious yield. When we see the levee repair work is delayed and PICs are negligent, we lose our courage to cultivate."

This correspondent also found as water receded, many levees were repaired with dirt taken from right beneath the slopes which is strictly prohibited by the Kabita Rules as it weakens the levees. According to the rules, this dirt has to be taken at least 500 metres away from the spot.

Salehin Chowdhury, joint secretary of Haor Bachao Sunamganj Bachao, a platform for ensuring farmers' rights, said, "The levee restoration work is now a way of embezzling public money. They [officials involved in the projects] initiate unnecessary schemes to benefit a few individuals."

Asked, Engineer Shamsuddoha, said, "PICs are paid the final instalments after their work is checked. But we'll look into the matter strictly this year."

Zahangir Hossain, deputy commissioner of Sunamganj and president of the district committee for restoring the levees, said, "We're hopeful of completing all the work before February 28. No complaint against any PICs has been filed yet."

According to the Department of Agricultural Extension in Sunamganj, Boro paddy is estimated to be cultivated on 2,20,695 hectares of land this year.

Foridul Hasan, deputy director of DAE in Sunamganj, said, "As water receded from haors early and the harvest was good last year, farmers are preparing to cultivate the paddy on more land."



A view of the levee at Alampur village in Sunamganj's Madhyhanagar upazila. Restoration work on the levee is going on, but the dirt was taken from beneath the slope, which weakens the levee and exposes the Boro paddy being cultivated there to floods. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: DWOHA CHOWDHURY