

MP LITON MURDER Condemned killer held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rab has arrested a condemned convict in the Awami League MP Manjurul Islam Liton murder case.

Arrestee Chandan Kumar Roy, the lone fugitive in the case, coordinated the murder that took place in 2016, Commander Khandaker Al Moin, director of Rab's legal and media wing, told a press briefing yesterday.

Two Rab teams, in a drive, held Chandan around 9:30pm on Sunday from Satkhira's Bhomra area.

Seven accused were sentenced to death in the murder case on November 28, 2019, including former local Jatiya Party MP Col (ret'd) Abdul Kader Khan, who was the prime accused in the case.

Of the seven convicts, Chandan fled to India soon after the killing in December 31, 2016, police said earlier.

Interpol issued a red notice for him after the incident.

Rab said conflict started brewing between Liton, the lawmaker of Gaibandha's Sundarganj, and Chandan, who was the assistant office secretary of the Sundarganj upazila unit AL, when their supporters clashed in mid-2015. Chandan was injured in the incident.

Moin said Chandan sought help from Liton so that his name got dropped from cases filed against him. But Liton refused.

Liton, who was then president of Sundarganj upazila unit AL, also expelled Chandan from the party in early 2016 over allegations of corruption and extortion. Chandan became angry and got in touch with Kader.

According to Rab, Kader planned the murder mainly due to the political dispute, establishing dominance and becoming a lawmaker again by removing Liton. In early 2016, he shared the plan with Chandan.

In the evening of December 31, 2016, two assailants, close to Chandan and Kader, entered Liton's house in Masterpara of Sundarganj and shot him and fled the scene.

He died of his bullet wounds at Rangpur Medical College Hospital that night.

His younger sister Fahmida Bulbul Kakoli filed the murder case with Sundarganj Police Station the next day.

On February 7, 2018, a Gaibandha court framed charges against eight people, including Kader, after police submitted the charge sheet on April 30, 2017.

Of the accused, seven were arrested by the law enforcers while Chandan went into hiding.

After the charge sheet submission, an accused died in jail.



This photograph taken on Sunday and released yesterday, shows a Ukrainian soldier standing atop an abandoned Russian tank near a village on the outskirts of Izyum, Kharkiv region, eastern Ukraine. Story on page 12.

PHOTO: AFP

50m people stuck in ‘modern slavery’

Says UN, warns the crisis fuel poverty, unsafe migration

AFP, Geneva

Fifty million people around the world are trapped in forced labour or forced marriage, the UN said yesterday, warning that their ranks had swelled dramatically in recent years.

The United Nations had set a goal to eradicate all forms of modern slavery by 2030, but instead the number of people caught up in forced labour or forced marriage ballooned by 10 million between 2016 and 2021, according to a new report.

The study, by the UN's agencies for labour and migration along with the Walk Free Foundation, found that at the end of last year, 28 million people were in forced labour, while 22 million were living in a marriage they had been forced into.

That means nearly one out of every 150 people in the world are caught up in modern forms of slavery, the report said.

"It is shocking that the situation of modern slavery is not improving," Guy Ryder, head of the International Labour Organization (ILO), said in a statement. "Nothing can justify the persistence of this fundamental abuse of human rights."

The Covid-19 pandemic, which worsened conditions and swelled debt levels for many workers, has heightened the risk, the report found.

Coupled with the effects of climate change and armed conflicts, it has contributed to "unprecedented disruption to employment and education, increases in extreme poverty and forced and unsafe migration", compounding the threat, it said.

It is a long-term problem, the report cautioned, with estimates indicating entrapment in forced labour can last years and forced marriage is often "a life sentence".

Women and children are by far the most vulnerable.

Children account for one out of five people in forced labour, with more than half of them stuck in commercial sexual exploitation, the report said.

Migrant workers are meanwhile more than three times more likely to be in forced labour than non-migrant adult workers, it showed.

"This report underscores the urgency of ensuring that all migration is safe, orderly, and regular," Antonio Vitorino,

head of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), said in the statement.

Modern slavery is present in basically every country in the world, with more than half of cases of forced labour and a quarter of forced marriages in upper-middle income or high-income countries.

The report found that the number of people -- mainly women and girls -- stuck in forced marriages had risen by a full 6.6 million since the last global estimates in 2016.

The number of people in forced labour swelled by 2.7 million over the same period.

The increase was driven entirely by more forced labour in the private economy, including in forced commercial sexual exploitation.

But the report also said that 14 percent of those in forced labour were doing jobs imposed by state authorities, voicing concern about abuse of compulsory prison labour in a number of countries, including the United States.

It also pointed to grave concerns raised by the UN rights office about "credible accounts of forced labour under exceptionally harsh conditions" in North Korea.

Joj Miah files writ seeking Tk 10 crore

FROM PAGE 1

In the writ petition Jalal said the five convicts played a part in his false imprisonment. He requested the HC to form an inquiry committee, headed by a retired Appellate Division judge, to find out whether the five or anyone else was involved in his wrongful arrest and imprisonment.

He submitted the petition through Supreme Court lawyers Humayun Kabir Pallob and Mohammad Kawsar, requesting it to ask the government to confiscate all moveable and

immoveable properties of the five convicts if they were found liable of violating his fundamental rights.

Pallob, Jalal's lawyer, told The Daily Star that the HC may hold a hearing on the writ petition next week.

Jalal said in the petition that he is innocent and was wrongfully arrested from his home in Noakhali's Senbagh on June 10, 2005 and kept in custody as Joj Miah till June 27, 2009.

He was released after charges against him were dropped.

On August 21, 2004, assailants

hurled grenades at the AL rally on Bangabandhu Avenue where the party chief and then leader of the opposition Sheikh Hasina was delivering a speech.

A total of 24 people, mostly AL leaders and activists, including late president Zillur Rahman's wife Ivy Rahman, were killed and over 400 others injured in the attack.

Eleven days after the incident, then prime minister Khaleda Zia, also chairperson of BNP, held AL leaders responsible for the grenade attack.

AL MP Pankaj removed from party posts

FROM PAGE 1

Awami League Executive Council removes you from the position of member of the party's advisory council in Barisal for breaching party discipline ...

"You are requested to submit a reply in writing to the central office within the next 15 days."

Talking to The Daily Star, Talukder said, "He [Pankaj] has been removed from all positions in the party for violating discipline.

"Law and order in the district was deteriorating because of him [Pankaj]. And the party has taken

measures in this regard... I don't want to say anything further."

According to party sources, there have been frequent clashes in Barishal's Mehendiganj upazila because of conflicts between two AL factions.

The intra-party feuds led to four killings in the run-up to the last union parishad election in Pankaj's constituency in June.

Allegations have surfaced that he acted in favour of an independent candidate, instead of the party-backed candidate in the polls there.

The independent candidate won

the UP election.

In the latest factional clash on August 28, six leaders and workers of Jubo League and Chhatra League were gravely injured. It was alleged that Pankaj's supporters were involved in the clash.

Most of the leaders and workers of Barishal AL took a stance against Pankaj following a series of intra-party clashes, according to sources in the local AL unit.

The district AL recently wrote to the party's central committee, asking it to remove Pankaj from all his party positions, added the sources.

4-lane Cumilla-B'baria highway on cards

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The four-lane, which is expected to be operational by June 2026, will join the national highway and the 50-km four-lane that is being built from the Ashuganj river port to the Akhaura land port.

This would enable Indian goods to reach its northeastern states faster.

Also at today's meeting, another slow-moving project taken up in 2016 to aid in transshipment -- the Tk 477.8 crore project to construct a dual-gauge rail line from Akhaura to India's Agartala -- will be placed for its fourth revision.

This time, the Bangladesh Railway would be seeking an extension of a year to wrap up the project, which

is being implemented mostly with Indian grant.

As of June, the project's deadline after its third revision, its financial progress is 29.39 percent, shows a railways ministry document.

The project, under which a 14.26 km dual-gauge rail line is being constructed, was delayed due to the pandemic, said Md. Abu Zafor Miah, its in-charge.

"Since it is being implemented with Indian grant, everything is coming from India. The factories in India were shut for some time for Covid and there were travel restrictions too."

But work is going on in full swing now.

"We are hopeful of completing

the project by June next year," he said, adding that India has almost completed the work to lay a 10 km dual-gauge line at their end.

The project though has become a symbol of the slow pace of the development works being implemented with Indian LoCs.

As of June, only \$1.1 billion of the \$7.36 billion LoCs have been used, according to data from the finance ministry.

In fiscal 2020-21, \$142 million was disbursed, and in the following year, \$324 million.

Six other projects are being implemented by the BR with Indian LoC and their financial progress range from nil to 82.15 percent.

Damage bill will be steep

FROM PAGE 1

worth \$10.8 billion and a 100-year flood would cause damages worth \$21.109 billion, said the report.

"At present, 6.4 percent of the coastal population are exposed to a 10-year flood event, and 27.3 percent of the coastal population are exposed to a 100-year flood," said the report.

With a half-metre rise in sea level, this would increase to 10.2 percent and 34.5 percent respectively.

This situation is worsened by erosion, both along the coast and in tidal channels, the report said.

It cited a recent study that examined river erosion and found that a quarter of river channels migrated more than 60 metres over the last 30 years, with some moving as much as 500 metres.

The WB analysed coastal resilience

projects since the 1960s -- including large infrastructural adaptations like the construction of polders -- and zeroed in on a lack of maintenance as a significant challenge.

A polder is a low-lying tract of land enclosed by dikes.

"O&M [operations and maintenance] in Bangladesh suffers from a lack of resources. Budgetary, organisational, and political constraints can easily lead to a focus on grand schemes rather than mundane O&M needs," said the report.

"The lack of O&M is complicated by the fact that many donor-aided projects do not provide funds for O&M," it said.

The report also emphasised on the use of mangrove forests for coastal protection.

"In terms of combating coastal and

riverineerosion, the traditional approach has been to build either temporary measures or hard engineering solutions. These measures can be effective but can also be expensive and require intensive maintenance. Softer nature-based solution approaches have also been implemented through the conservation and reforestation of mangrove forests throughout the coastal zone, which help in stabilising shorelines while simultaneously providing sustainable community livelihood opportunities and biodiversity benefits," said the report.

"Hybrids of traditional infrastructure with nature-based solutions, like sediment solutions and mangrove restoration for protection against cyclones and erosion, should be pursued in future programmes," it recommended.

SOS from a troubled facility

FROM PAGE 1

A woman came to the hospital outdoor from Chapainwabganj yesterday morning with her mentally challenged daughter.

"Outdoor doctors prescribed three months' medication but refused to admit my daughter," said Saifura Begum. "They provided us with just one of the medicines."

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, Dr Roton Kumar said there had been no supply of food and medicine in the hospital for the last two months due to the legal battle with a contractor over the tender process.

"The court issued a stay order in June this year, so we could not invite fresh bidding for the supply of food, medicine and other necessities for the patients," he said.

"We are managing food for the patients from local traders through vouchers as per the arrangement made by a hospital committee. I'm entitled to spend Tk 10 lakh a year by vouchers. But in the last two months, I already used up vouchers worth over Tk 37 lakh without paying any

amount."

Dr Roton said he had issued Sunday's office order, fearing departmental action for the expense beyond the limit. "After getting the ministry's assurance, I have withdrawn the order."

Regarding the legal battle, he said, "We have come to know that the court stay has been removed but we are yet to get the official papers to this end. If we get the documents, we can go for the fresh bidding but the total process requires time."

Dr Masud Rana, the resident psychiatrist of the mental hospital, said, "Patients who are admitted here get specialised treatment and food. Due to lack of supplies, we are failing to provide proper services."

He added, "There is no medicine supply at this moment. We are giving treatment with medicine from the Department of Social Services. That's why medicine supply for outdoor patients was cut."

Contacted, Dr Md Shafiur Rahman, director-in-charge (hospitals and

Bangladesh asks Qatar for more LNG

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Amid rising prices of fuel, Bangladesh has requested Qatar to export LNG to it so it can meet the demand for industrial growth in the country.

Shahriar Alam, state minister for foreign affairs, made the request to his Qatari counterpart Soltan bin Saad Al-Muraikhi during the second Foreign Office Consultations meeting between the two countries in Doha yesterday.

Bangladesh has been importing LNG [liquefied natural gas] from Qatar since 2018 under a 15-year agreement signed in 2017 to get a supply of 1.8-2.5 million metric tons of LNG annually.

Now, with the global price hike of fuel and disruptions to supplies due to the Russia-Ukraine war, Bangladesh is looking for alternative sources of energy at low cost.

Man gets life for killing friend for Tk 1,500

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Natore

A Natore court yesterday sentenced a man to life imprisonment for killing his friend for just Tk 1,500 in 2018.

Md Sharif Uddin, district and sessions judge of Natore, also fined convict Jasim Uddin, 40, of Chauri village in Natore Sadar upazila, Tk 10,000.

According to the case statement, Jasim borrowed Tk 1,500 from his friend Sohag Mia, son of Siraj Mia of the same area.

Later, when Sohag asked Jasim to return the money, he planned to kill Sohag. Hetook Sohag near a pond on August 31, 2018. There he stabbed Sohag to death. Later, he washed his hands and returned home and went to see Sohag's body with others, the statement added.

337 more BNP men secure HC bail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A total of 337 BNP men from eight districts yesterday got six weeks' anticipatory bail from the High Court in 12 cases.

The cases were filed recently on charges of vandalising vehicles and obstructing police.

On Sunday, 220 more BNP leaders and activists from four districts got six weeks' anticipatory bail from the HC in nine similar cases.

Yesterday, the HC bench of Justice Md Rezaul Hasan and Justice Md Atabullah granted the bail after hearing 50 petitions filed by the accused seeking bail.

The bench also asked the accused petitioners to surrender before the lower courts concerned within six weeks.

Earlier in the day, the 337 accused BNP leaders and activists from Faridpur, Noakhali, Feni, Cumilla, Thakurgaon, Jhenidah, Narayanganj and Natore appeared before the HC bench for bail.

Petitioners' lawyers AM Mahbub Uddin Khokon and Md Ruhul Quddus Kazal told The Daily Star that police filed the "false" cases to harass the BNP men, though Awami League men attacked and beat them up during their agitation programmes.