

BNP man who fled home to avoid arrest found dead

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Bogura*

A BNP activist, who fled home to avoid arrest following a recent police case, was found dead in a mustard field in Bogura's Sherpur upazila yesterday.

The deceased, Abdul Matin, 55, was a member of Bishalpur Union BNP under the upazila, said upazila BNP General Secretary Rafiqul Islam.

Matin was among the 64 accused in the case filed by police over a clash between supporters of BNP and Awami League in Sherpur upazila on November 15 amid a countrywide blockade.

Around 19 people, including five police officials, were injured in the clash.

The complainant brought allegations of obstructing government work and injuring policemen during the clash.

Matin's daughter-in-law Shahnaz Khatun said he went into hiding after police filed the case on November 15. On Wednesday, he went to his daughter's house in Sherpur and left shortly after getting some winter clothes.

Around 8:30am yesterday, locals found Matin in a mustard field in Mandail village, lying in a pool of blood.

He was taken to the Sherpur Upazila Health Complex where doctors declared him dead, added Shahnaz Khatun.

Contacted, Babu Kumar Saha, officer-in-charge of Sherpur Police Station, said, "We still do not know the details. We are looking into the incident."

The body was handed over to his family after an autopsy, said the OC, adding that legal process in this connection is underway.

Find way to end Israel-Palestine conflict Bangladeshi business community urges UN, international leaders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The business community in Bangladesh strongly condemned the massacre of Palestinian civilians by the Israeli military.

In a joint press statement issued on Wednesday, six top trade bodies called for a settlement of the decades-old dispute to avoid further escalation, protect millions of displaced people, and ensure peace in the Middle East.

They are the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) Bangladesh, the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI), the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI), and the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI).

Govt to be even tougher on BNP

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on November 15.

The BNP believes that these initiatives are nothing but the government's scheme to "eliminate the opposition from the field".

Ruhul Kabir Rizvi, senior joint secretary general of the party, said the Awami League wants to put even more BNP men behind bars.

"They are doing these things so that their own misdeeds do not come to the fore and the public get confused," he added.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on November 18 also hinted at going tough on the opposition when she said anyone trying to foil the election will face serious consequences.

The AL has asked its units across the country to form committees against each polling centre to "face" the BNP men who may try to obstruct the election.

AL's student wing Bangladesh Chhatra League ordered its units to form 20-member committees "to guard" polling stations, sources said.

"We will be busy with the election campaign, but we will not spare the BNP on the streets. We will continue our campaign and counter them at the same time," AL Joint General Secretary AFM Bahauddin Nasim told the Daily Star.

DMP's Uttara Division has identified around 50 people with "links to the BNP and its associated bodies" who give money to arsonists and take part in arson themselves, said a top officer, requesting anonymity.

Biplob Kumar Sarker, joint commissioner of operations at the DMP, said, "We have identified the people involved in the planning, preparation, and implementation of the acts of sabotage."

According to police sources, officers recently found a 40-member WhatsApp group in which ward-level BNP leaders give instructions to arsonists, sources said.

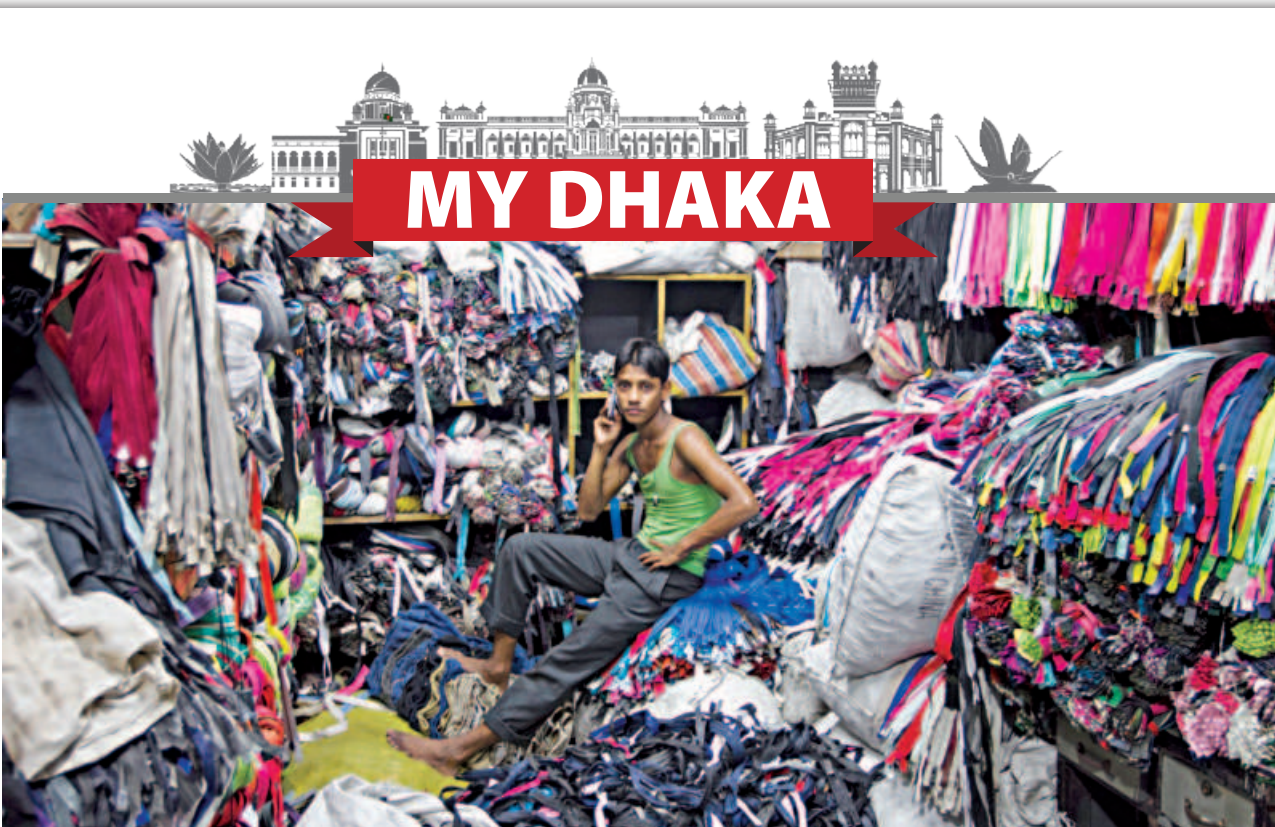


PHOTO: LS ARCHIVE

BANGABAZAR Rising from the ashes

RBR

At 2,551 metres above sea level on Chandragiri Hills in Nepal, all I could thank for was Dhaka's Bangabazar. It's a dramatic choice to be thankful for especially in that beautiful location, but if it was not for the heavy overcoat and winter boots from my beloved Bangabazar, I would have frozen to death in that bone-chilling cold.

Dhaka does not experience low temperatures like Dinajpur and Rangpur -- I thank God all the time for that. Wintery chills in Dhaka last a maximum of three weeks but the city's fashionistas make the most of this season by being at their trendiest best.

Bomber jackets, hoodies, coats, blazers, capes, mufflers, gloves -- people need them all to look pretty in winter. To stay in vogue during the winter days, a trip to Bangabazar is everyone's calling. Although the terrible fire in April this year has gutted the shops of this popular and affordable clothing market, it has not been able to put a damper on the shop owners' spirits.

Mohiuddin Jibon, once a proprietor, is now serving as a salesman in his brother-in-law's shop, Nila Garments, at the nearby Bangabazar Complex at Babosaye Samity, Fulbaria.

"I had two shops in Bangabazar and

sold pants and winter goods. I had a



sizeable profit after rolling my investments. The sorry twist of our fate is that we, who rented shops, will not get the compensation package; only the land owners will benefit," Mohiuddin says.

Mohiuddin could not gather enough to start his business and the future looks bleak because he does not know how long the construction work will take to rehabilitate small businessmen like him.

People like Mohiuddin had a great stint going for them because shop rents and utilities were less compared to any shopping malls or bazars. Unfortunately, rental business owners

like him are scattered now, finding it hard to reassemble.

"Some of us have re-built the shacks that now serve as make-shift shops but the main market is yet to be re-constructed. We have heard that the construction of the building complex will start soon; maybe this winter. Many of us are already back with our goods, to lessen our loss and keep us afloat. We need to put food on our family's plate," says Mohiuddin.

Keeping the rehabilitation plan in mind, the Bangabazar Complex is in full operation. It is a five-storied shopping centre, which was under construction for a long time but was speedily completed after the fire.

Now, with ATM booths and lifts, this centre has become the hub for winter clothes. This building is adjacent to the blue polythene sheds in the burned-down main Bangabazar section, and is a totally different experience from what Bangabazar was earlier.

It was earlier used as a warehouse and now the sixth floor has become a winter clothes hub -- from children's gloves to thermal innerwear for the elderly, this place has all sorts of winter clothes and more.

I was sceptical about Bangabazar running in full gear after the fire, but this place has a gritty spirit and it stood up again. Just to salute their strength of mind, this season, buying winter clothes from there is a moral duty for the people of the city. We must provide them with business to stand tall again.

Groundwater not so uncharted anymore

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are no new news. People came to know about the growing threats in bits and pieces from occasional, localised research and tests by various authorities over decades. But a comprehensive and countrywide assessment was badly required to make an overall sense of the resources, which is huge but should not be taken for granted.

Why? Because the data analysis from the World Bank funded project calls for caution.

"We must use the groundwater very judiciously and cautiously, looking at the data. Indiscriminate use will only make a disaster imminent," warns Dr Anwar, who is also a leading groundwater expert in the country.

The quality of groundwater is changing slowly from safe to toxic due to unplanned extraction for irrigation, industrialisation, and water supply to big cities. Groundwater levels are falling in two-thirds of the areas in Bangladesh every year.

Home to an estimated 23 million people, Dhaka records a jaw-dropping fall of seven feet (two metres) a year in the water level. If this pattern continues, Dhaka will have to embrace someday the fate of Cape Town or Johannesburg, which provides a scanty water supply to city-dwellers from rainfall storage.

Outside the capital, hand-pumped tubewells that were so commonly used to extract drinking water only a decade

back now cannot access freshwater any more down to 165 feet. It is now a thing of the past, as arsenic pollutes the shallow water, with manganese and iodine the new concerns. Money is now on whirling deep tube wells for fetching fresh water from 1,000 feet below.

However, in the 19 coastal districts, salinity made the 1,000-foot depth off-limit for freshwater. The outlook of the drinking water is grimmer even in the middle coastal districts like Pirojpur and Gopalganj although it is not for saline intrusion. Thanks to a unique geological condition, a vast pool of saline water got trapped when the delta was built during ancient times. The one-third area in Bangladesh where the groundwater level is not falling includes the salinity-hit coastal districts.

The withdrawal-recharge (through rainfall or waterbodies) ratio of groundwater is not that encouraging and consistent in all regions of Bangladesh. The rice-producing north is precariously placed.

On the other hand, the western region generally experiences less rainfall than the eastern and it reflects on the outcome. Groundwater depletion is taking place in the west, but not in the east.

Apart from the rice-producing north, the natural recharging of groundwater reservoirs is also not working well in the greater Dhaka region, big cities, and industrial areas.

Smaller parties planning big

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It sold 402 nomination forms until yesterday evening.

Founded by former BNP leader Nazmul Huda, the party sought registration with the EC before the last polls. The party was denied and it filed a suit before a court to get registered.

It was registered in February and Huda's daughter Antara Selima Huda was the acting chairperson for a while after her father's death.

Later, former BNP leaders Shamsher Mobin and Taimur Alam Khandaker took charge of the party.

The Daily Star yesterday evening contacted Kazi Rezaul Hossain,

chairman of the Bangladesh Congress.

Asked what a person needs to get nominated, he said, "You can obtain a nomination form by paying Tk 5,000."

Responding to a question about the requirement for party membership, Rezaul said anyone can collect nomination forms. "The forms for constituencies in Dhaka have been sold," he said.

Bangladesh Congress until yesterday sold 694 nomination forms.

Two other newly formed parties said they would field candidates 300 seats.

Bangladesh Nationalist Movement (BNM) officials said a party-ticket aspirant only needs to pay Tk 1,000 to

buy the nomination form.

Md Shahjahan, the party's new secretary general and spokesperson, said more than 250 people collected nomination forms till yesterday.

Party membership is required for nomination but Shahjahan could not say how many members his party had.

M Sarwar Hossain, founding joint convener of the party, said, "The party was hijacked by some opportunists and they are selling nomination forms illegally." He said he would not run.

Bangladesh Supreme Party (BSP) officials said that until yesterday a total of 236 party nomination forms were sold.

Leaders of nine Islamist parties

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election would mean ignoring public opinion.

But after meeting the PM, the Islamist parties expressed desires to take part in the 12th national election, sources told The Daily Star.

The six other Islamist parties that called on the PM last night had earlier announced that they would participate in the election.

Of them, Islami Oikya Jote, Islamist Front Bangladesh, Bangladesh Islami Front and Bangladesh Supreme Party are registered with the EC.

The two other parties are Bangladesh Islami Oikya Jote and Ashkane Aulia Oikya Parishad.

Bangladesh Supreme Party Chairman Sayeed Saifuddin Ahmed said, "The prime minister assured us that the national election will be free, fair, and people will be able to cast their votes."

Quoting the PM, he said, "Those of you who have the potential to win the election should participate in the polls. I can assure you the election will be free, fair, and impartial."

"The prime minister also told us that those who are still away, will also participate in the polls. She said a conspiracy is going on at home and

JP extends time for nomination

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to reach a consensus with Raushan Ershad over some unresolved issues. Once the consensus is reached, we will collect nomination forms," Golam Moshir told this newspaper.

Meanwhile, Chunnu yesterday again claimed there was no division in the party.

"The Jatiya Party is united under the leadership of the party chairman," he told reporters at the party chief's Banani office.

Asked about Raushan and other leaders not collecting nomination forms, Chunnu said the chief patron is an honorable person in the party.

"If she wants to participate in the

Robbers attempt to loot Krishi Bank

Fail to break into vault, removes CCTV tape before fleeing

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Pirojpur*

There was an attempted robbery at a branch of Bangladesh Krishi Bank in Pirojpur Sadar upazila early last morning but the robbers failed to break into the main vault.

The incident took place at the bank's Shankarpasha branch in the upazila.

Witnesses said that around 3.30am, a gang of 5-6 robbers broke into the bank through one of the window grills and took the lone night guard Shafikul Islam, 34, hostage.

"But they failed to break into the main vault of the bank, where all the money is kept," Badrul Islam, an officer of the bank, told this newspaper.

The robbers stole the hard drive of close-circuit (CC) cameras to remove evidence of their break-in, he added.

Speaking on the matter Abir Mohammad Hossain, officer in charge of Pirojpur Sadar Police Station, said police have visited the spot.

"We will be questioning the night guard for leads," the OC said.

Man given death penalty for killing wife, children

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Sylhet*

A Sylhet court yesterday sentenced a man to death on charge of killing his wife and two children in 2021

Moshiur Rahman Chowdhury, senior session judge of Sylhet, announced the verdict in presence of the convict Hifzur Rahman, 36, of Binnakandi village in Gowainghat upazila.

The convict was also fined Tk 30,000, said Public Prosecutor Nizam Uddin.

According to the case document, on June 2021, Hifzur hacked his wife Aleya Begum, son Mijan, 11, and daughter, Anisa, 5, with a machete in their sleep. Aleya's father Ayub Ali filed a case with Gowainghat Police Station accusing unnamed persons and later police detained Hifzur.

N Korea scraps military deal with South

Vows to deploy new weapons at border

REUTERS, *Seoul*

North Korea said yesterday it would deploy stronger armed forces and new weapons on its border with the South, a day after Seoul suspended part of a 2018 military accord between the two Koreans in a protest over Pyongyang's launch of a spy satellite.

North Korea's defence ministry said in a statement carried by the KCNA news agency that it would restore all military measures it had halted under the deal with South Korea, which was designed to de-escalate tension along their shared border.

"From now on, our army will never be bound by the September 19 North-South Military Agreement," the statement said.

"We will withdraw the military steps, taken to prevent military tension and conflict in all spheres including ground, sea and air, and deploy more powerful armed forces and new-type military hardware in the region along the Military Demarcation Line."

abroad over the national election. She urged all to remain in favour of the country. She then asked whether we are going to participate in the election.

"In reply, we said we are an election-oriented party and we will participate if the situation remains good. The two-hour long meeting with the PM started around 7:00 in the evening, and [she] was very cordial, enquiring about the well-being of our family members."

Abul Hasnat Amini, chairman of the Islami Oikya Jote, told this correspondent that the PM invited everyone to the meeting.

The Islamist leaders requested the PM to release the arrested leaders of different Islamist parties.

"In reply, the PM assured us that the innocent alem-ulema in jails will be freed," Hasnat said.

The party leaders presented a calligraphy of "Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim" to the PM.

Ataullah Hafezzi, Syed Saifuddin Ahmad, Abul Hasnat Amini, Mohammad Faizullah, Syed Bahadur Shah Mojaddedi, Misbahur Rahman Chowdhury, Shahinur Pasha Chowdhury, Alam Noori, Abul Khair and five others attended the meeting.

election, we will extend all kinds of support to her," he added.

Chunnu also said Raushan informed him over the phone that she wanted to collect a nomination form.

"We will give her the nomination form once she sends a representative to collect it."

The JP over the last four days sold 1,737 nomination forms.

The party's nomination board will start interviewing the nomination seekers from Friday and the process will continue until November 26.

The final list of the party's nominees will be made public on November 27.