

31 deported from US were ‘shackled for 60 hours’

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Thirty-one Bangladeshis were sent back from the US yesterday, with several of them saying they were kept in handcuffs and shackles for nearly 60 hours before being flown to Dhaka.

They arrived at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport around 7:00pm on a special US military flight, according to airport officials.

After landing, airport authorities handed them over to Brac, which provided transportation and emergency support.

Most of the deportees are from Noakhali, while others are from Sylhet, Feni, Shariatpur, Cumilla, and several other districts.

The returnees said they were freed from the restraints after reaching Dhaka airport.

Earlier this year, the US deported 226 Bangladeshis, many of whom alleged they were restrained in a similar way.



This handout photo taken and released by Agence Kampuchea Press (AKP) yesterday shows local residents evacuating after clashes along the Cambodia–Thailand border in Oddar Meanchey province, Cambodia.

PHOTO: AFP

Mob beats man to death in Noakhali

Family claims he was targeted due to rivalry

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

A man was beaten to death by a group of people in Noakhali’s Begumganj upazila yesterday.

The victim, Fakhru Islam Manju alias Boli, 25, was a resident of Khalasibari area under Chowmuhani municipality.

Police said Boli had a criminal record, and people were angry with his criminal activities. He was killed due to “public outrage,” said the police.

Officer-in-Charge (OC) of Begumganj Model Police Station, MA Bari, confirmed that Boli died on spot, and his body was sent to the morgue of Noakhali 250-Bed General Hospital for autopsy. He added that Boli’s associate Kiron was undergoing treatment at the hospital.

“Boli was accused in five to seven criminal cases. People in the area had long been enraged by his criminal activities,” said the OC.

Locals and police said a trader, Mizanur Rahman, was carrying over Tk 20 lakh cash from his home to Chowmuhani market around 7:30 am today. Boli and his associate Kiron intercepted and abducted Mizan on the way, took him to their den, and tortured him. Upon hearing Mizan’s screams, locals gathered, dragged Boli out and beat him to death.

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Mother, daughter murdered

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be the only person entering and leaving the flat before and after the incident, Mohammad Ibne Mizan, deputy commissioner of Tejgaon Division of Police, told The Daily Star.

The investigators are analysing the footage and investigating whether anyone else was involved, he said.

The footage shows Ayesha entering the flat around 7:51am wearing a burqa and leaving at about 9:36am dressed in a school uniform, with a bag slung over her shoulder.

Noorem Mahpara, a cousin of Nafisa, said the uniform belongs to Nafisa, a student of class-IX. The wardrobe’s lock was found broken, while Laila’s gold jewellery – including bangles, earrings and a necklace – are missing, according to Noorem.

Police and family members said Azizul left for work around 7:00am. As exams are ongoing at his school, he returned home earlier than usual and repeatedly knocked at the door but got

no response.

He then opened the locked door with a spare key and found Nafisa’s body lying face down in a pool of blood by the door. Laila’s body was lying in a pool of blood in the kitchen.

Hearing Azizul’s screams, neighbours rushed in and informed the police. The residents of the two adjacent flats were outside during the murder.

Mohammad Aiyub, the building’s manager, said the woman, aged around 20, came to the building four days ago wearing a burqa and sought work as part-time house help.

“As the victims were looking for a house help, we sent her to their flat.”

After that, the house help started working for two hours daily.

“As the woman was leaving the building, I could not recognise her as she was in a school uniform. I stopped her, and she said she came to the 7B flat as a guest a couple of days ago and is now leaving.”

The woman hurriedly left the scene

on a rickshaw, he said.

Police recovered two knives from the flat.

Signs of struggle were found inside the flat. Blood stains were seen at the entrance, inside the flat, and on the walls, and kitchen. The wardrobe and toilet and furniture were found in a disorderly condition, said police officials.

A murder case is being prepared for filing, said Mezbah Uddin, the officer-in-charge of Mohammadpur Police Station.

Police are checking what valuables are missing, and if confirmed, this would be added to the case, he said.

Investigators said they were gathering CCTV footage of the past several days to get more information.

Nafisa’s maternal uncle, Babu, said that the killer, in all likelihood, washed herself in the bathroom afterwards.

“Two people were killed for a meagre amount of money. People are not even safe in their bedrooms any more. What kind of country are we living in?”

Mong Prue Sain: A monarch who fought

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Chittagong to India took shelter at the Mong palace, even if only for one night. We freedom fighters initially stayed in the palace for days on end.”

Beyond providing food and shelter, Mong Prue Sain’s wife, Queen Nihar Devi, also set up a temporary hospital for the wounded refugees and freedom fighters.

Kraingo Khulti Marma, now over 85, who was a domestic help at the palace during the war, said, “There were thousands of people in the palace then; some were refugees, some were freedom fighters. Some would eat and then leave for India; others would stay for several days. We had to cook four or five times for each meal. It was a massive undertaking.”

The royal family handed over 33 rifles and ammunition from their own collection to the freedom fighters.

For five weeks, from late March to April, the palace functioned simultaneously as a shelter, hospital, and freedom fighter camp.

FORCED EXODUS

With the Pakistani threat growing continuously, staying at the royal palace became too dangerous for the king and his family. High-ranking officials of the Mukti Bahini and the Mujibnagar Government, therefore, urged the king to move to India via Ramgarh. To prevent the Pakistani army from attacking the king, freedom fighters established a defensive perimeter in Manikchhari.

On April 30, CHT Deputy Commissioner HT Imam sent an urgent letter and a jeep to King Mong Prue Sain, requesting his immediate departure to Ramgarh. Subsequently, the king and his family set off for Ramgarh.

On the same day, Mukti Bahini Commander-in-Chief Colonel MAG Osmani arrived in Ramgarh and ordered Bangalee soldiers to defend the area.

Soon after the king’s departure, Pakistani forces attacked the palace. The freedom fighters fought fiercely, yet they couldn’t hold their ground for long and eventually had to retreat. Meanwhile, Razakars (local collaborators) looted the Mong palace, destroyed priceless artefacts, and set up a camp inside.

While sheltering in the Ramgarh SDO bungalow, the king met key military figures, Major Mir Shawkat Ali and Captain Rafiqul Islam (later Sector 1 Commander). At that time, King Mong instructed the local indigenous communities to enlist in the war effort.

Later, crossing into India on May 2, he toured refugee camps in Tripura, urging young men to also enlist. Many did, including Kongga Sain Marma of Guimara. Now 70, he recalled: “The

king came to our camp and told us to fight. Forty to 50 of us joined battles across several frontiers.”

RECOGNITION

The story of Mong Prue Sain’s participation in the war was prominently featured by international news outlets, most notably the BBC.

The king became a high-value target, with the Pakistani forces offering a substantial reward for his live capture. There were several attempts on his life, all of which failed due to vigilance by freedom fighters and Indian forces.

For security reasons, Mong Prue Sain later moved to Rupaichhari. Having been trained as a marksman,

Prue Chowdhury, recalled, “After independence, we found almost nothing left – golden Buddhist statues, luxury cars, rare birds, musical instruments, antiques, all gone.”

Yet the king himself remained resolute. When family members lamented their losses, he replied: “Yes, we lost much, perhaps even my life could have been taken. But in return, we gained freedom. That is the greatest achievement of my life.”

Speaking about the contribution of the king, Sector 1 Commander Major (ret’d) Rafiqul Islam, Bir Uttam, who is now 82, said, “King Mong’s role cannot be overstated. He opened his palace,



Nanuma Devi Memorial Hall



Mong Prue Sain



Kraingo Khulti Marma



Kongga Sain Marma

the king maintained his active role in the war effort by training freedom fighters at the Harina camp.

Eventually, he was taken to Agartala, where he met Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. Throughout the war, he campaigned across India, raising funds and awareness for Bangladesh’s cause.

In October and November, Mong Prue Sain fought alongside Indian forces in several battles, notably at Akhaura in late November. In recognition, the Indian Army awarded him the honorary rank of “Colonel” that very month.

LEGACY

By the time the king returned home at year’s end, the palace was in ruins. His grandson, Kumar Suching

donated his cars, weapons, and wealth for the cause, and inspired hundreds of indigenous youths to fight. His legacy in the Liberation War will remain unforgettable.”

SOURCES

All accounts of King Mong Prue Sain’s contributions to the Liberation War have been drawn from historical texts and witness testimonies.

Key documentary references include “Bangladesher Swadhinota Juddho – Sector Bhitik Itihash (Sector-I)” and Swadhinota Juddho: Dolil Potro (Volume 9). In addition, specialised works such as “Muktijuddhe Adibasi” by Ayub Hossain and Charu Haque, and “Adibasi Muktijoddha” by Tapan Kumar Dey, provided further context.

Graft taints the graft watchdog

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Mamunur Rashid was dismissed for allegedly torturing his former wife and demanding dowry.

Contacted, ACC Chairman Momen said, “If my commission is not free of corruption, then I lose the moral right to speak out against corruption elsewhere. Whenever we find evidence of corruption within our institution, we take immediate action.”

Former ACC director general (legal) Moyeedul Islam cautioned that corruption within the commission “obstructs the commission’s anti-corruption efforts and creates a negative perception among the public”.

He said a committee led by the ACC chairman verifies complaints and takes action, but noted that the internal anti-corruption committee “is currently dysfunctional”. He urged its reactivation to address internal graft effectively.

EX-BOSSSES UNDER SCANNER

The ACC on December 1 confirmed it has opened an inquiry into former chairman Iqbal Mahmood, the first time in the commission’s history that a former chief is being investigated over corruption allegations.

ACC sources said Iqbal’s name

surfaced during interrogation of his brother, Sadik Mahmud Bokul, who was arrested on September 11. Sadik is alleged to have maintained close business ties with Motazzurul Islam Mithu, a controversial health contractor long accused of large-scale graft.

Investigators claim that the two remained untouched for years due to Iqbal’s influence during his tenure, and that Iqbal is accused of accepting two luxury Gulshan flats from Mithu.

The inquiry will examine allegations of money laundering, abuse of power, and illegal wealth accumulation.

On December 3, the ACC also approved a corruption case against former ACC commissioner and ex-BTRC chairman Md Jahurul Haque, another first for the institution.

According to the case statement, between October 2015 and January 2018, BTRC reduced international incoming call rates from \$0.030 to \$0.015 without government approval, slashing the state’s revenue share from 51.75 percent to 40 percent while raising IGW operators’ share from 13.25 percent to 20 percent.

The move allegedly caused Tk 383.73 crore in revenue-sharing

losses, Tk 2,941.99 crore in reduced call-rate losses, and a foreign currency shortfall of Tk 5,685 crore.

RECOMMENDED REFORMS

In its report submitted to Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus on January 15, the ACC reform commission called for a high-powered task force with representatives from intelligence and investigative agencies to identify corrupt officials and pursue disciplinary and criminal action.

It recommended dissolving the ACC’s internal anti-corruption committee and replacing it with an independent disciplinary division staffed by ACC officers and personnel deputed from defence, intelligence, and law enforcement agencies.

The unit would enforce the code of conduct, carry out covert investigations and counter-intelligence operations, review asset declarations under the ACC (Employees) Service Rules, 2008, and impose punitive measures.

Since its establishment in 2004, replacing the Bureau of Anti-Corruption, the ACC has struggled with persistent internal complaints. The Service Rules empowered the formation of a three-member internal anti-corruption committee.

Polls schedule ‘tomorrow or the day after’

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election, CEC Kazi Habibul Awal announced the polls schedule live on both state-run broadcasters. This time, the EC has decided to record the address.

Meanwhile, Home Adviser Lt Gen (ret’d) Jahangir Alam Chowdhury said that all necessary preparations for the upcoming national election have been completed, including training for law enforcement agencies, procurement of body-worn cameras, and ensuring electricity at every polling centre.

He said this while briefing

journalists after the 17th meeting of the Advisory Council Committee on Law and Order at the home ministry conference room in the Secretariat.

The adviser also said the recovery process for looted weapons is ongoing. Asked whether a level-playing field has been ensured for the election, he said, “We want to deliver a free and fair election.”

Jamaat-e-Islami yesterday said the EC has yet to ensure a level-playing field.

The party also expressed concerns over the worsening law and order situation as the country prepares for

the polls and July Charter referendum in mid-February.

Jamaat expressed these concerns when a six-member delegation met Chief Election Commissioner AMM Nasir Uddin at the Election Bhavan in Dhaka’s Agargaon in the afternoon.

Speaking to reporters after the hour-and-a-half-long meeting, Jamaat Secretary General Mia Golam Porwar said, “We are witnessing serious disturbances during our campaigns. Party meetings are being attacked, and even women involved in voter outreach are being harassed, attacked, and injured.

Plots afoot to derail democratic process

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“Every day, when we open newspapers, we see attempts to hide the truth. But hunger speaks the truth. Empty pockets speak the truth,” he said.

Warning of difficult days ahead, he said a “dangerous” campaign was underway to portray everyone except one group as bad.

“Sadly, after August 5, for some reason, it seems that this practice has not ended. This idea must change,” he added.

“We believe in multi-party democracy. In a multi-party system, people will express different opinions. They have the right to speak. But the belief that one person is good and

everyone else is bad can never be acceptable.”

Tarique said several political parties were promising honest governance and justice with vague language the BNP does not use. “Where is their plan?”

“The BNP is the only party presenting detailed and practical plans covering education, agriculture, women’s welfare, farmers, healthcare and economic reforms,” he said.

“Step by step, we will fix the problems and take Bangladesh towards a normal, responsible and democratic future.”

If voted to power, he said, the BNP would dig canals to reduce flooding,

ensure irrigation for farmers, launch major tree-plantation programmes to protect the environment, and train unskilled people for better employment. The party also plans to provide cards with special facilities to 50 lakh families in its first year in office and introduce a farmer’s card.

At the event, BNP Standing Committee member Salahuddin Ahmed alleged that the public had identified a political party trying to deceive people by exploiting religion.

“It has no policy, no ideals, and no plan, and is trying to deceive the public in the name of religion. Their real face has already been exposed,” he said, without naming any group.

We work with religion, we don’t use it

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parliamentary election, he said. “In the interest of the country, even if, by the will of Allah, we win 200 seats, we will still form such a government, Inshallah.

“We will not exclude any party,” he told the reporters.

Dismissing the allegation of using religion in election campaigns, the Jamaat chief, “We work with religion; we do not use it for political gain.

“You know better who actually uses religion – those who suddenly start praying more during elections, who put on caps, and carry prayer beads.”

Responding to a journalist’s query, Shafiq said there was no scope for deferring the election.

“We believe the election must be held within the February deadline. Any deviation from it would severely harm the country, and we do not want the nation to suffer at the hands of anyone.”

Meanwhile, eight like-minded parties, including Jamaat, yesterday announced that they have accepted the government’s decision to hold the referendum on election day, despite earlier demands for the referendum to be held before the polls.

The announcement came at a

press briefing following a liaison committee meeting at the central office of Khelafat Majlish in Purana Paltan, Dhaka.

Khelafat Majlish Secretary General Ahmad Abdul Kader said, “We wanted the referendum to be held before the election. However, following the government’s announcement, we have accepted this in the greater interest.”

On seat-sharing, Jamaat Assistant Secretary General Hamidur Rahman Azad said that in each constituency, only one candidate nominated by the eight like-minded parties will contest based on mutual understanding.