

3 charges brought against ex-NTMC chief

FROM PAGE 12
and other inhumane acts, including complicity in and failure to prevent crimes under the International Crimes (Tribunals) Act, 1973.

Charge 1 states that, acting on Ziaul's planning and with his direct participation, four persons, including one unidentified individual, were killed in 2011 near the Bypass Road area of Gazipur's Pabali.

Charge 2 alleges that between 2010 and 2013, at least 50 people, including former BDR member Nazrul Islam Mallik and Alkas Mallik, were shot dead at the confluence of the Baleshwar river in Barguna, and their bodies were dumped into the river.

Charge 3 states that between 2010 and 2013, Ziaul was involved in the killing of another 50 people in Barguna and in the Sundarbans in Bagerhat under the guise of anti-forest bandit operations.

Chief Prosecutor Tajul Islam urged the tribunal to take cognisance of the charges, award the accused the highest punishment or any punishment deemed appropriate, and order the confiscation of his properties following trial.

The three member tribunal, headed by Justice Md Golam Mortuza Mozumder, took cognisance of the charges and issued a production warrant against Ziaul, who is currently in custody, ordering that he be produced before the tribunal on December 21.

'EPIC ROLE' IN ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

Addressing the tribunal, Tajul said that after 2009, a culture of enforced disappearance and extrajudicial killing became entrenched in Bangladesh, with Ziaul playing an "epic" role.

He said Ziaul was posted to Rab as a major in 2009 and soon became "one of the most trusted officers" of then prime minister Sheikh Hasina through his activities.

"As a result, he never returned to his parent force, the Bangladesh Army, and remained in Rab until he was forced to retire as a major general in 2024," Tajul told the tribunal.

Despite allegedly not completing mandatory promotion courses or commanding a battalion, brigade, or formation, Ziaul was promoted to the rank of major general, an "unprecedented incident" in the history of the Bangladesh Army, Tajul said.

Briefing journalists after the hearing, the chief prosecutor alleged that the promotion was a reward. "Because of his extraordinary efficiency in killings and enforced disappearances, the then government rewarded him by granting the post in this irregular, rule-breaking manner," he said.

HORRIFYING KILLINGS

Tajul said one of the major killing zones was Char Duan of Barguna's Pathargata, stretching through the Char Duan canal to multiple points and the estuary of the Baleshwar.

According to eyewitness

accounts, law enforcers in plain clothes would instruct shopkeepers at Char Duan Bazaar to close by 9:00pm, order lights to be switched off, and warn residents not to leave their homes, creating an atmosphere of fear.

Around 11:00pm or later, Rab members would arrive in black-glass microbuses, jeeps, and double cabin pickup trucks. Detainees were brought with their hands and mouths tied and heads covered with black cloth, leaving no chance of identification.

From the Char Duan Ghat, these detainees were taken on trawlers or boats to the middle of the river and shot dead using pistols with pillows pressed against their heads or chests," Tajul told the tribunal.

"After the shooting, their stomachs were slit open, cement blocks were tied to their heads and legs, and the bodies were dumped into the water. Blood and other traces on the boats were scrubbed to erase evidence. The code name of such preparation was 'Gestapo,'" he said, adding that those involved in the operations were warned that speaking out would result in the same fate.

Similar operations were allegedly carried out in the Buriganga and Shitalakhya rivers near Dhaka, the estuary of the Karnaphuli River, and the Bay of Bengal near Patenga in Chattogram, Tajul told the tribunal.

In many cases, Ziaul personally participated in the killings; in others, Rab

intelligence members or selected personnel from different battalions carried out the operations under his direct instructions, the prosecution said.

KILLING IN SUNDARBANS

The prosecution further alleged that Ziaul used so-called anti-robbery operations in the Sundarbans as a cover for mass killings, effectively turning the forest into a sanctuary for "killing missions".

Investigations found the involvement of both senior and junior officers, though their identities were withheld due to ongoing probes, Tajul told the tribunal.

According to the charges, detainees were taken at night to pre-arranged "robber dens" inside the Sundarbans. Rab allegedly built makeshift huts stocked with household items, clothes, and food to create the appearance of robber hideouts.

Victims were brought blindfolded and bound, shot dead, and Rab members then fired repeatedly to simulate gunfights. In some cases, loyal journalists were taken to nearby locations, kept away from the killing sites, and later briefed with fabricated narratives.

Many of the operations were either led by Ziaul or carried out under his direct supervision by Rab intelligence and selected members of Rab 8 and Rab 6, he added. Three major operations were cited

— Operation Nishankhal, Operation Mora Bholo, and Operation Katka.

Govt suspends

FROM PAGE 12
Badiul is the president of the unity council, while Rabbani and Nazrul are vice presidents and Sumon is the publicity secretary.

Meanwhile, the Inter-Ministry Employees Association has filed applications with the relevant ministries, seeking a meeting with several advisers and secretaries.

The applications, signed by Nazrul Islam, coordinator of the association, stated, "The employees are deeply ashamed and saddened by these short-sighted actions. Because of these

actions. Because of these</p