

## BNP leader shot dead in Jashore town

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

A BNP leader was shot dead by unidentified miscreants in Shankarpur of Jashore town yesterday evening.

The deceased, Alamgir Hossain, 55, was the joint general secretary of Jashore Municipality Ward 7 BNP.

The incident occurred when Alamgir was in front of the councillor's office in the area around 7:30pm. A group of people suddenly opened fire, police said, quoting locals, adding that one of the bullets pierced the left side of his head and he collapsed on the spot, bleeding profusely.

Hearing the gunshots, locals rescued him and rushed him to Jashore General Hospital, where Dr Bichitra Mallik declared him dead.

The doctor added that Alamgir had died before reaching the hospital due to excessive bleeding from the head injury.

Following the incident, panic and tension spread across the area.

Anindya Islam Amit, acting organisational secretary of the BNP's Khulna divisional unit, said BNP leaders and activists were systematically killed even during the Awami League government's tenure, and now it is occurring in the same manner.



Farmers in Rajshahi's Barind region busy threshing and drying paddy in their courtyards yesterday. Once dried, the paddy will be stored in granaries or husked at mills for consumption. The photo was taken in Chaitanyapur area of Godagari upazila.

PHOTO: AZAHAR UDDIN

## US allies, foes alarmed by action

AFP, Paris

The US military operation that led to the capture of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro yesterday sparked alarm across the international community, with allies and foes of Washington and Caracas expressing disquiet.

US President Donald Trump said Nicolas Maduro and his wife would be taken to New York to face federal charges after military strikes and an operation which he described as looking like a "television show".

The Venezuelan government decried what it termed an "extremely serious military aggression" by Washington and declared a state of emergency.

Countries such as Russia and Iran, which had longstanding ties with Maduro's government, were quick to condemn the operation but their alarm was also shared by Washington's allies including France and the EU.

Russia's foreign ministry said the "act of armed aggression against Venezuela is deeply concerning and condemnable".

It demanded the US leadership "reconsider its position and release the legally elected president of the sovereign

country and his wife".

China strongly condemned the use of force by the US against a sovereign country and the use of force against the president of a country.

"China firmly opposes such hegemonic behaviour by the US, which seriously violates international law, violates Venezuela's sovereignty, and threatens peace and security in Latin America and the Caribbean. We urge the US to abide by international law and the purposes and principles of the UN Charter and stop violating the sovereignty and security of other countries," its foreign ministry said.

Iran, which Trump bombed last year, said it "strongly condemns the US military attack on Venezuela and a flagrant violation of the country's national sovereignty and territorial integrity".

Mexico, which Trump has also threatened with military force over drug trafficking, strongly condemned the US military action in Venezuela, saying it "seriously jeopardises regional stability".

Colombian President Gustavo Petro, whose country neighbours Venezuela, called the US action an "assault on the sovereignty" of Latin America which would lead to a humanitarian crisis.

**"Beijing firmly opposes such hegemonic behaviour by the US, which seriously violates international law, violates Venezuela's sovereignty, and threatens peace and security in Latin America and the Caribbean."**

— Chinese foreign ministry

Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva slammed the US attacks as a "serious affront" to Venezuela's sovereignty, adding that it crossed "an unacceptable line".

Cuba, a strong ally of Venezuela, denounced "state terrorism against the brave Venezuelan people".

US allies Britain, France and Germany also condemned the attack, saying such action "violates the principle of not resorting to force that underpins international law".

European Commission President

Ursula Von der Leyen said the bloc is very closely following the situation in Venezuela. "Any solution must respect international law and the UN Charter."

However EU said Maduro lacked legitimacy.

Spain offered to mediate in the crisis to find a way to a peaceful solution, while calling for "de-escalation and restraint".

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said all countries should "uphold international law" and added that "the UK was not involved in any way in this operation" as he urged patience in order to "establish the facts".

In a rare expression of support for the US operation by a major European country, far-right Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni — a Trump ally — argued the US military action in Venezuela was "legitimate" and "defensive".

Among major Latin American nations, Argentina's President Javier Milei lauded Venezuela's new "freedom". Ecuador, Panama also welcomed the US move.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres was "deeply alarmed" by the US strikes, with his spokesman quoting him as saying it could "constitute a dangerous precedent".

## Star, Prothom Alo attack cases now with DB

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The cases filed over the attacks on the offices of the country's two leading newspapers — The Daily Star and Prothom Alo — were yesterday transferred to the Cyber and Special Crime Division of the Detective Branch of Dhaka Metropolitan Police.

Contacted by The Daily Star last evening, Hasan Mohammad Nased Rikabder, deputy commissioner of the division, said his unit has received the documents of the cases, which were initially being investigated by Tejgaon Police Station, and will begin working on them from Sunday.

On the night of December 18, a mob of around 500 people attacked the Prothom Alo office in the capital's Karwan Bazar. They vandalised and looted it and set it on fire.

Many of the attackers, armed with locally made weapons, sticks, and flammables, later moved towards The Daily Star head office on Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue. They forcibly broke the steel gates and glass doors and stormed the building.

They assaulted staff members, vandalised office property, looted valuables, and set at least three floors of the building on fire, trapping around 28 staffers inside.

On December 22, Mizanur Rahman, head of operations of The Daily Star, filed a case with Tejgaon Police Station against 350-400 unidentified people under the Penal Code, the Anti Terrorism Act, the Special Powers Act, and the Cyber Security Ordinance.

The same day, Maj (ret'd) Sazzadul Kabir, head of security at Prothom Alo, filed another case with the same police station against 400-500 unidentified people over similar charges.

According to investigators, 37 people were arrested till December 26 in connection with both cases.

Of them, 11 were arrested in The Daily Star's case, while the remaining 26 were arrested in Prothom Alo's.

Of the 37, 18 are from Dhaka's Tejgaon, while 16 are from Dakshinkhan, Keraniganj, South Keraniganj, Shyampur, Badda, Kamrangirchar, Pallabi, Shah Ali, Mirpur, Hazaribagh, and Bangshal. The remaining three are from Shariatpur Sadar, Panchagarh Sadar, and Bhola's Borhanuddin.

However, there have been no new arrests since then.

Meanwhile, police have sought a seven-day remand to interrogate eight accused in Prothom Alo's case.

A sub-inspector of Dhaka court, requesting anonymity, said, "The hearing on the remand prayer will be held on January 5."

Ashik Iqbal, inspector (investigation) of Tejgaon Police Station, who had been handling The Daily Star's case, said, "Since December 27, we have been busy with large-scale programmes. In the meantime, the decision was made to transfer the cases to the DB."

## US will 'run' Venezuela

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Ahead of the overnight strikes, the US had accused Maduro of running a "narco-state" and rigging the 2024 election.

The Venezuelan leader, a 63-year-old former bus driver handpicked by the dying Hugo Chavez to succeed him in 2013, has denied those claims and said Washington was intent on taking control of his nation's oil reserves, the largest in the world.

US sources said Maduro was captured by special operations forces and whisked by helicopters to the Iwo Jima, an amphibious assault ship in the Caribbean, ahead of his transfer to New York.

The 79-year-old Republican posted a picture of Maduro in custody on a US naval ship wearing a blindfold, handcuffs and what looked like noise-canceling ear muffs. He and his wife were being taken to New York to face narcotics and terrorism charges.

US-backed opposition leader Maria Corina Machado, who won the Nobel Peace Prize last year, posted on social media: "the hour of freedom has arrived."

She called for the opposition's candidate in the 2024 election, Edmundo Gonzalez Urrutia, to "immediately" assume the presidency.

But Trump scotched any expectation that Machado should emerge as Venezuela's new leader. She doesn't have "support or respect" there, he said.

He indicated he could instead work with Maduro's deputy, Delcy Rodriguez, saying "she's essentially willing to do what we think is necessary to make Venezuela great again."

Trump also made clear that the US presence is unlikely to be short.

"We're there now, but we're going to stay until such time as the proper transition can take place."

Venezuelans had been bracing for attacks as US forces, including the aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford, spent months massing off the coast.

Caracas residents woke to explosions and the whir of military helicopters around 2:00am (0600 GMT). Airstrikes hit a major military

base and an airbase, among other sites, for nearly an hour, AFP journalists said.

The bombing turned out to be only part of the more ambitious plan to topple Maduro and bring him to US soil to face narco-trafficking charges.

Trump said the assault began with a partial blackout caused by US "expertise".

The top US military officer, General Dan Caine, said 150 aircraft took part in the operation, supporting troops helicoptering in to seize Machado with the help of months of intelligence into the leader's daily habits — down to "what he ate" and

criminal charges in the US and that no further action was anticipated inside Venezuela.

Maduro was indicted in US federal court in 2020 on narco-terrorism and other charges for running what prosecutors called a scheme to send tonnes of cocaine to the US through an alleged "Cartel de Los Soles". He has always denied that.

"They will soon face the full wrath of American justice on American soil in American courts," Attorney General Pam Bondi said on X about Maduro and his wife.

In the run-up, Trump had sought a "blockade" of Venezuelan oil,



In this screen grab, helicopters fly past plumes of smoke rising from explosions in Caracas yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

what pets he kept.

Maduro, 63, and his wife "gave up" without a struggle and there was "no loss of US life," he said.

The US and numerous European governments already did not recognize Maduro's legitimacy, saying he stole elections both in 2018 and 2024.

Maduro was captured by a team that included elite US special forces, including the US Army's Delta Force, a US official told Reuters. Republican US Senator Mike Lee said Secretary of State Marco Rubio had told him Maduro would stand trial on

expanded sanctions against the Maduro government and staged more than two dozen strikes on vessels the US alleges were involved in trafficking drugs, killing more than 110 people.

It was unclear under what legal authority the latest US strikes were carried out.

Trump's move risks a backlash from the US Congress, which has the constitutional right to declare war, and from his own political base, which favours an "America first" policy and largely opposes military intervention abroad.

## Rebels a cause of headache

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Party sources said many leaders submitted nomination papers outside the official list. If they do not withdraw by the January 20 deadline, they may face expulsion from party positions and even loss of primary membership.

The party has also warned that tough action will be taken if any leader contests as an independent in constituencies left for alliance partners.

BNP Standing Committee member Salahuddin Ahmed said the party had assured its allies that organisational actions would be taken in such cases. "If the expelled leaders withdraw their nomination papers on their own, the party may also reconsider and withdraw the expulsion order."

Noting that January 20 is the last date for withdrawing nominations, BNP Joint Secretary General Syed Emran Saleh Prince warned, "If anyone still stays in the race by going against party decisions, there will be no chance of forgiveness. The party may decide to expel them for life."

On December 30, BNP expelled nine leaders for defying party decisions and submitting nomination papers.

They are: Barrister Rumeen Farhana, co-international affairs secretary of the party's national executive committee; national executive committee members

Muhammad Gias Uddin, Mohammad Shah Alam, Hasan Mamun and Abdul Khalek; former assistant general secretary of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal Tarun Dey; former convener of Dhaka North City BNP unit Saiful Alam Nirab; Sylhet district BNP unit vice-president Mamunur Rashid; and Bancharampur upazila BNP unit president Mehdi Hasan Palash.

REBEL CONTENDERS

In Brahmanbaria-2, Rumeen Farhana submitted nomination papers although BNP had left the seat for Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam Joint Secretary General Junayed Al Habib. "I have fought for the rights of the people for the last 17 years. I will continue my campaign and call on voters to respond through their ballots," she told The Daily Star.

In Dhaka-12, Saiful Alam submitted nomination papers despite BNP leaving the seat for Revolutionary Workers Party General Secretary Saiful Haque. "I have prioritised my constituency and party activists. I am determined to contest," he said.

In Sylhet-5, Mamunur Rashid filed nominations for the seat left vacant by the party for Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam President Ubaidullah Faruque.

He noted that although he was given BNP tickets in 2008 and 2018, the seat was later shifted to alliance partners, angering local activists.

"In this case, I have decided to take part in the election by giving more importance to the people of my constituency. I have no comment on whatever decision the party has taken. Right now, I am focusing on the election."

In Narayanganj-4, Muhammad Gias Uddin collected nomination papers for this seat that's also given to Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam.

In Bhola-1, BNP gave up the seat for Bangladesh Jatiya Party Chairman Andaleeb Rahman Partha, yet BNP leader Golam Nabi Alamgir filed nominations.

In Brahmanbaria-6, five BNP leaders submitted nomination papers as independents, although the seat was left for Zonayed Saki of Ganashanghati Andolon.

In Patuakhali-3, BNP central executive committee member Hasan Mamun submitted nomination papers as an independent, defying the party's decision to leave the seat for Gono Odhikar Parishad President Nurul Haque.

Multiple rebels have also filed nominations in other constituencies: four each in Natore-1, Jhalokathi-1, Kishoreganj-1, and Brahmanbaria-6; three each in Rajshahi-5 and Panchagarh-2; and two each in Bagerhat-1, Bagerhat-2, Chattogram-14, and Kushtia-4.

## ROs cancel about 220 nominations

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to discrepancies in the voter signatures they submitted.

"I submitted my nomination papers as an independent candidate, but they have not been accepted yet. We will appeal and the process has already started," Tasnim said.

The nomination papers submitted by most of the independent candidates were declared invalid due to the same reason, according to EC officials.

Independent candidates are required to collect and submit signatures from at least 1 percent of voters in their respective constituencies to qualify for nomination.

In the capital, Nagorik Oikko President Mahmudur Rahman Manna's nomination for Dhaka 12 was declared valid although his nomination from Bogura 2 was announced invalid the previous day.

Yesterday, the nomination of Bangladesh Labour Party Chairman Mustafizur Rahman Iran from Jhalakathi-1 constituency was cancelled but his nomination for Dhaka 12 was announced valid.

Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis Ameer Mamunul Haque (Dhaka-13) was also announced valid.

According to returning offices, a total of 81 aspirants from 20 seats in Dhaka were cancelled. A total of 238 aspirants submitted nominations for the seats.

Nomination of Retired Armed Forces Officers' Association (RAWA) President Abdul Haque, Jamaat's candidate for Dhaka-2, was declared invalid.

In Jamalpur, the nomination of 12 candidates, including Jatiya Party's candidate AKM Fazlul Haque for Jamalpur-1 constituency, was cancelled.

In Cumilla, the nomination of

31 candidates, including Jatiya Party's candidate Nurul Islam Milon for Cumilla-1 constituency, was cancelled.

In Chandpur, the nomination of 15, including BNP-nominated candidate Mozammel Hossain for Chandpur-4 constituency, was cancelled.

In Narayanganj, the nomination of 16 candidates, including former state minister Rezaul Karim for Narayanganj-3 constituency, was cancelled.

In Gopalganj, the nomination of 12 candidates, including Bangladesh Jatiya Hindu Mohajote General Secretary Gobinda Chandra Pramanik, was cancelled.

Nominations of four in Lalmonirhat, three in Kurgraim, three in Pirojpur, 15 in Noakhali, 10 in Kishoreganj, two in Pabna, 10 in Laxmipur, seven in Brahmanbaria, 19 in Gazipur and four in Jhenidah were cancelled.