

MURDER AT RU

Killed by fellow BCL men?

ANWAR ALI and MA SAYEED, Rajshahi

Soon after the shooting of Rajshahi University BCL leader Rustam in his dormitory room on Friday, two fellow activists were seen by his side with one of them holding a pistol, witnesses say.

Rustam Ali Akanda, 22, Suhrawardi Hall unit joint secretary of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), was declared dead at Rajshahi Medical College Hospital around 2:00pm that day.

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A bullet pierced Rustam's right lower chest and went out through the left shoulder damaging the heart, liver and lungs; it caused internal bleeding leading to his death, doctors said.

The ill-fated youth was buried at his home village in Gaibandha around 11:00am yesterday.

The Daily Star has interviewed two witnesses who are Rustam's neighbours at the dorm. Hearing a single gunshot, they had rushed towards his room.

Through the window, one witness said, he saw Rustam lying in a pool of blood, and standing close to him were Abdullah Al Galib, publicity secretary of RU BCL, and Selim Reza, a BCL activist and second-year student.

A classmate of Rustam, a fourth-year student of political science, was also in the room.

Selim was holding a pistol while Galib was scolding him. "What have you done? You should have watched out."

According to the witness, the gunshot was heard around 1:15pm and Rustam was taken out of the room around 1:30pm for hospital.

Another witness said he saw the pistol in Galib's hand while Selim was trying to stop the bleeding. "I was so frightened... I passed out returning to my room."

The classmate, who was present in the room, told The Daily Star he was studying with Rustam before the two BCL men came. Selim shot Rustam following an altercation over leadership of the hall unit BCL.

While talking to these correspondents, he was crying and trembling in fear. "Don't ask me anything... they will kill me too."

An RU BCL leader said the pistol belonged to Rustam. "It was given to him several days ago as he was threatened by some Shibir men."

On the statements of the witnesses, Proloy Chichim, deputy commissioner of Rajshahi Metropolitan Police, said they got a similar version.

No case was filed till the filing of this report last night and none was arrested.

According to campus sources, Rustam was vying for president post of the hall unit BCL in the April 10 council while Selim Hossain, a third-year law student was his contender. Selim Reza was loyal to Hossain.

But RU BCL President Mizanur Rahman Rana said, "Both are my followers. Rivalry between Rustam and

Selim is out of question."

He claimed about 70 percent resident students of Suhrawardi Hall somehow belong to Shibir. "It is possible that they were behind it."

Galib, Selim or Hossain could not be contacted.

Meanwhile, the RU authorities were forced to suspend all classes and examinations as the pro-Awami League student body began an indefinite strike on the campus demanding immediate arrest of "Shibir men involved in the killing".

'RETURNED A CORPSE'

Yesterday, Rustom was buried at his family graveyard in his village Chalk Narayan of Sadullapur upazila after a funeral attended by thousands including leaders and activists of Awami League and its front organisations.

Wailing nonstop, Rustom's father Shahjahan Ali Akanda said, "I had sent my son to university and hoped he would be highly educated. But he returned a corpse."

The mother, Rowshan Ara Begum, who was fainting frequently, demanded capital punishment of the culprits involved in her son's killing.

Seeking arrest and punishment of Rustom's killer, Sadullapur BCL activists and locals brought out a procession yesterday.