

Cops maul gold medallist

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Hospital with injuries all over their bodies.

Witnesses said a police car of Deputy Inspector General (Special Branch) Dr Sadiqur Rahman approached the shooting complex area at 12:15pm with the DIG's wife in it. While the chauffeur was attempting to park the car in front of the complex, a security guard asked him not to park there since the spot is not parking space.

As the chauffeur insisted on parking there, the guard got locked in an argument with him, which turned into a scuffle.

Other guards and employees of the complex also came out and joined the scene.

On information, a three-member patrol team of police led by Sub-inspector Jasim rushed there with Gulshan Zone Deputy Commissioner of Police Obaidur Rahman Khan, Assistant Commissioner Zannatul Hasan Khan, and Officer-in-charge Mahub Alam Khan following.

According to witnesses, the policemen started beating whoever they found inside the complex.

Many of about 30 shooters, who were practising inside, came out hearing the commotion and fell victim to the indiscriminate beating.

According to the shooting federation officials, at least 25 shooters were injured.

"We don't know why police attacked us suddenly as we came out to see what was happening," Asif, the gold medallist in 2002 Commonwealth Games in Manchester, told reporters as he was lying on a bed in the hospital.

"We, in fact, tried to stop the brawl but police would not listen to us."

A group of marauding policemen went to the dormitories and tried to storm the women's quarters.

As the mayhem ended, police arrested three shooters Asif, Shoebuzzaman, and Ali Hossain, cook Jahangir and an Ansar member Zannatul Ferdous and took them to Gulshan Police Station.

To their utter dismay, Asif and

Shoebuzzaman once again saw the marauding mood of police there, who started beating them again with sticks.

"They broke three to four sticks on us there. They beat me everywhere. I can hardly walk," Asif said, expressing apprehension that he might not be able to participate in the next Asian Games.

SI Faisal Zaman filed a case against the five accusing them of assaults on police and produced them before the court.

The court, on receiving bail petitions, freed Asif and Shoeb on bail and sent the other three to jail.

As Asif and Shoeb were being taken to the hospital, profusely bleeding Asif was struggling to walk as blood was dripping from his head.

"I don't know when I'll be able to pick up a rifle again," said Asif.

Shoeb, also in pain, described the horror he had suffered at the hands of the law enforcing agency. "We were stunned as they started to beat us senselessly. They dragged me to a toilet and beat me as I was lying on the floor," said Shoeb.

Talking to reporters, Orthopaedic Surgeon Ziaul Haq of the hospital confirmed that X-ray reports of the shooters did not show any fracture.

"But it will take at least six to seven weeks for the injuries to heal. They won't be able to resume practice before that," said the surgeon.

Meanwhile, DMP Commissioner SM Mizanur Rahman claimed that the shooters were arrested because they had been involved in an assault on the policemen.

"The staff of the complex forcibly took our patrol team inside and beat them up. Our OC and AC also became victims of the beating when they rushed there," the DMP commissioner said during a news conference in his office in the evening.

He denied that police beat up the arrestees inside Gulshan Police Station but said the arrestees might have been injured during the scuffle with police in the shooting complex.

He further claimed that three law enforcers -- SI Jasim, Constable Anwar Hossain, and an Ansar

member Ziaur Rahman -- were injured there.

DMP directed Joint Commissioner (Detective Branch) Shahidul Islam to investigate the whole incident.

"If we find in the investigation any excess by our policemen, we'll take steps accordingly," he said.

National Shooting Federation Vice-president Kashem Humayun termed the police attack as barbaric and demanded punishment of Gulshan Zone DC Obaidur Rahman Khan, Officer-in-charge Mahub Alam Khan and SI Jasim.

"We are considering filing of a case against this barbaric attack. We also demand release of the three who are in jail. Now we fear for our security," said Humayun at a news briefing in the shooting complex.

"They ransacked the dormitory and injured at least 25 persons. We also demand that all the injured get proper treatment from the government," he added.

Fire, a 47-year-old professor at Stanford University School of Medicine in California, said he was "very happy" to be honoured.

"At first of course one doesn't believe it. It could be a dream or a mistake or something like that. I guess it's not," he told the radio.

Genes make proteins, the molecules that comprise and maintain all the body's tissues. They set the protein-making machinery in motion through a gofer molecule called messenger RNA, or mRNA.

In 1998, Fire and Mello, working together on nematode earthworms, discovered a mechanism that interferes with mRNA -- RNA interference (RNAi). RNAi, they discovered, is a natural molecular switch, regulating gene expression in plants and animals as well as humans.

By "silencing" over-active or malfunctioning genes, researchers hope to be able to devise a new generation of treatments for virus infections, cardiovascular disease, hormonal disorders and a range of inherited health problems.

It is also hoped that their research will be used in agriculture. "Their discovery clarified many confusing and contradictory experimental observations ... (and) heralded the start of a new research field," the Nobel committee said.

The pair published their discovery in the journal *Nature* in 1998, and in 2002 the US medical journal *Science* named RNAi as the breakthrough of the year.

But the science is very new and analysts caution that technical problems and safety concerns remain to be resolved before RNAi therapies enter the medical vocabulary.

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Last year, the Medicine Prize

Nobel prize

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Nobel is typically awarded decades later, when history proves that the research was truly groundbreaking.

"RNA interference is already being widely used in basic science as a method to study the function of genes and it may lead to novel therapies in the future," the jury said.

Mello said he was stunned by the Nobel Committee's speedy recognition.

"I was very surprised, mainly because I'm fairly young and I thought maybe there were so many other discoveries worthy of a Nobel prize," Mello, born in 1960 and a professor of molecular medicine at the University of Massachusetts Medical School, told Swedish Radio.

"I just assumed it was something that might come several years from now," he said just after receiving a telephone call from the Nobel committee in the middle of the night.

"It's still sinking in I think, I can hardly believe it."

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Last year, the Medicine Prize

went to Australians Barry J. Marshall and J. Robin Warren for their pioneering research on stomach ulcers, overturning conventional wisdom to prove they are caused by bacteria and not spicy food or stress, and best treated with antibiotics.

Fire and Mello will each receive a gold medal and a diploma and will share the prize sum of 10 million Swedish kronor (1.37 million dollars, 1.07 million euros).

The Nobel prizes, founded by Swedish industrialist Alfred Nobel, the inventor of dynamite, were first awarded in 1901.

The Physics prize will be announced on Tuesday and Chemistry on Wednesday. The Economics prize, awarded by Sweden's central bank, the Riksbank, is scheduled for October 9.

The Literature prize is traditionally awarded on a Thursday, though the actual date is only announced 48 hours in advance. It is expected to be announced on either October 5 or October 12.

The announcement of the Peace Prize will wrap up the Nobel season on October 13.

The formal awarding of the prizes will take place in Stockholm on December 10.

Four held for ransacking puja mandap

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, City

Police arrested four goons of infamous Fazal Haq Bahini at Raozan upazila in Chittagong on Sunday night after they ransacked a puja mandap.

The arrestees are Jahur, Shah Alam, Mohammad Shaif and Liton. A faction of a ruling party allegedly backs the criminal gang, sources said.

Witnesses said at least 10 criminals riding motorcycles suddenly attacked the mandap at Ekata Club in Noapara of the upazila creating panic among the Hindu devotees. They also beat up a number of the devotees.

Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Jasim Uddin, who was visiting a nearby mandap at that time, rushed to the spot with police. Police made the arrests from the mandap area.

BNP men block road to protest cancellation of PM's visit

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

A faction of ruling BNP activists yesterday blockaded Dhaka-Sylhet highway at Lalabazar on the outskirts of Sylhet city for an hour and a half protesting against the cancellation of the prime minister's October 7 visit there.

Around 200 vehicles were stranded on both side of the road when activists of anti-Saifur Rahman camp put tree logs on the road and burned tyres around 12:30pm at Lalabazar, about eight kilometres off Sylhet city.

However, the blockade was withdrawn around 2:00pm when ruling party lawmaker Shafi Ahmed Chowdhury asked them to remove the roadblock assuring them that he would try to persuade PM to pay a visit.

Speakers at a rally held during the blockade said a vested interest quarter in BNP was trying to stop the development works of South Surma area. They blamed Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman, without naming him, for the cancellation of the PM's visit.

On contact, Shafi Ahmed told The Daily Star yesterday that even though the programme was finalised a week back, Saifur Rahman influenced the postponing of PM's visit to South Surma.

It may be mentioned that of the five BNP lawmakers in the Sylhet district, three sided with the anti-Saifur camp since an intra-party feud took a turn for worse about a year and a half ago.

Unruly workers

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incensed them," Jhama Begum, an operator of Opex, said.

At one point, the Opex staff assaulted the workers agitating outside and beat up four of them, the workers alleged. They also said police and Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) personnel deployed there helped the staff to drive away the small group of agitating workers.

When news of the incident spread, several hundred furious workers from a dozen garment factories in the area rushed there and stormed into the factory breaking open the iron-gate. They also damaged 14 vehicles, one computer, furniture and windowpanes of the factory.

The law enforcers posted there retreated during the attack, the factory authorities alleged.

After the attackers had left the place, the Opex authorities let their workers go out.

Director of the factory Col (ret'd) Mujibul Islam Khan, however, denied the allegation of confining the workers to the factory and claimed that they were working peacefully when some outsiders came there and were dispersed by police and Rab. Later, a mob came and started vandalising the factory, he added. He also denied that his staff had beaten up any workers.

Asked about forcing the workers to work on a government holiday, he said it is not a holiday in garments factory as per factory rules. "Only Hindus working here are given leave with proper salary and festival bonus," he added.

Earlier, at around 8:30am some 200 workers of Garry Stone Sweater factory at Kachukhet came out of their factory protesting against what they alleged was providing less payment for per sweater production.

As they marched towards Mirpur Section 10, over a thousand workers from around a dozen garments and sweater factories in the areas joined them demanding wage increase, payment of overtime and arrears. The procession ended at Kachukhet after parading Mirpur-10 and Shewarpara.

Police said the procession was peaceful and the demonstrators did not attack any garment factories or cause any traffic congestion.

Ex-ISI officials may be helping Taliban

Says Musharraf; Pakistan to act if India gives evidence of ISI role in Mumbai blasts

AFP, Washington/ Islamabad

Pakistan's intelligence service has not aided renegade Taliban fighters in Afghanistan, but retired intelligence officials could be involved in their support, President Pervez Musharraf told US television Sunday.

Asked whether Islamabad's Inter-Services Intelligence has been helping the ousted Taliban, Musharraf, speaking on NBC television's "Meet the Press" programme, answered with an emphatic "no."

"Nobody in the ISI has," he said.

However he added, "I have some reports that some dissidents, some people, retired people who were in the forefront in ISI during the period of '79 to '89, may be assisting with their links somewhere here and there," he said.

"We are keeping a very tight watch, and we'll get a hold of them if at all that happens."

The ISI and US Central Intelligence Agency supported anti-communist Mujahideen factions, including some radical Islamist groups, during the 1979-1989 Soviet occupation of Afghanistan.

The Islamist Taliban eventually seized power in the early 1990s after the overthrow of the pro-Moscow regime in Kabul.

Musharraf expressed concern that current support for the Taliban may be more widespread than many observers are aware.

"They don't know the realities on (the) ground. They're not conscious of the reality I'm seeing -- the extreme danger of this becoming a people's movement," he said.

Pakistan's foreign ministry yesterday pledged to take action if rival India produced any evidence to show that Pakistan's spy agency was involved in the Mumbai train bombings in July.

But Pakistan again denied claims by Mumbai police that the country's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) agency and the Lashkar-e-Taiba Islamic militant group helped launch the attacks that killed 186 people.

"If India feels that it has some information that suggests links with some people here or some kind of connection, then yes we will take action and will help India in its investigations," foreign ministry spokeswoman Tasnim Aslam told a weekly briefing.

Indian Foreign Secretary Shiv Shankar Menon said on Sunday that New Delhi would hand over evidence of the alleged links, but Aslam said Pakistan had not received anything from India so far.

"What we expect from India is to share the claimed evidence and

information with us so that we can cooperate with them," she said.

The Indian allegations, first made on Saturday, were an attempt to "divert attention from indigenous elements" engaged in terrorism in India, the spokeswoman said, adding that Mumbai police were "propagandists".

"This is all internal and this is yet another effort to externalise internal malaise," she said.

Pakistan at the weekend strongly rejected the claims, which come at a time when the ISI is also under scrutiny from Islamabad's increasingly disaffected allies in the "war on terror".

The Taliban are waging a violent insurgency in Afghanistan. The rebels, who are allied with al-Qaeda, have attacked troops in large numbers and intensified a campaign of suicide and roadside bombings.

More than 2,000 people have been killed in insurgency-related unrest this year, most of them Taliban rebels.

US-led forces launched the war against the Taliban and its al-Qaeda allies shortly after the September 11, 2001 terror attacks in the United States.

Venue

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electoral systems.

In response, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia on February 28 proposed that a committee with representatives from the ruling and opposition alliances discuss the issue.

Despite exchange of letters between the BNP and AL, a stalemate followed over inclusion of coalition partners Jamaat and Islami Oikya Jote in the proposed committee, raising the spectre of violent confrontation before the next parliamentary election.

Since then, political analysts and former advisers to caretaker government had kept stressing that street fighting between the rival parties could undermine the next caretaker government if the dispute is not resolved during the present government's tenure.

Finally, the prime minister on September 14 proposed that a secretaries general level dialogue might take place between the two major parties to break the stand-off.

Besides, pressure from business community, civil society members, and diplomats including the US and UK envoys kept mounting on the ruling and opposition parties to sit for negotiations.

Then, telephone conversations between Bhuiyan and Jalli and some intense initiatives throughout the last week paved the way for formal discussions.

Rice can't recall CIA warning of al-Qaeda attack on US

AP, Shannon, Ireland

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said she cannot recall then-CIA chief George Tenet warning her of an impending al-Qaeda attack in the United States, as a new book claims he did two months before the attacks on Sept. 11, 2001.

"What I am quite certain of is that I would remember if I was told, as this account apparently says, that there was about to be an attack in the United States, and the idea that I would somehow have ignored that I find incomprehensible," Rice said.

Rice was President Bush's national security adviser in 2001, when Bob Woodward's book "State of Denial" outlines a July 10 meeting among Rice, Tenet and the CIA's top counterterror officer.

"I don't know that this meeting took place, but what I really don't know, what I'm quite certain of, is that it was not a meeting in which I was told there was an impending attack and I refused to respond," Rice said.

Speaking to reporters en route to Saudi Arabia and other stops in the Middle East, Rice said she met with Tenet daily at that point, and has no memory of the wake-up call from Tenet described in the book.

"It kind of doesn't ring true that you have to shock me into something I was very involved in," Rice said.

There was near constant discussion of possible attacks overseas, and high alarm, Rice said.

The meeting between Tenet, Rice and Cofer Black of the CIA was not mentioned in the reports from several investigations of the Sept. 11 attacks, but Woodward wrote that it stood out in the minds of Tenet and Black as the "starkest warning they had given the White House" on al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden and his network.

Tenet asked for the meeting after receiving a disturbing briefing from Black, according to the book.

But though Tenet and Black warned Rice in the starkest terms of the prospects for attack, she brushed them off, Woodward reiterated Monday. He told NBC's "Today" show that Black told him the two men were so emphatic, it amounted to "holding a gun to her head" and doing everything except pulling the trigger.

Black reportedly laid out secret intercepts and other data "showing the increasing likelihood that al-Qaeda would soon attack the United States." Tenet was so worried that he called Rice from his car and asked to see her right away, the book said.

"Tenet and Black felt they were not getting through to Rice," Woodward wrote of the session. "She was polite, but they felt the brush-off."

Rice referred to the session as "the supposed meeting" and noted that it is not part of the independent Sept. 11 Commission's report.

"I remember that George was very worried and he expressed that," Rice told reporters. "We were all very worried because the threat reporting was quite intense. The problem was that it was also quite nebulous."

Rice, who was promoted to secretary of state in Bush's second term, also said she never argued that Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld should be fired. The book's suggestion that Rumsfeld would not take her calls is "ludicrous," Rice said.

Rumsfeld and Rice are not close, and he is often considered her rival in administration decision making. Woodward wrote that then-White House Chief of Staff Andrew Card twice tried to get Bush to sack Rumsfeld and replace him with Bush family counselor James A. Baker III, and that both then-Secretary of State Colin Powell and Rice backed the plan.

Woodward interviewed Rice for his new book.

Rice's latest Middle East trip is focused on strengthening support for Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and other moderate Arab leaders after a series of setbacks for democratic and moderate forces in the region.

Her trip includes visits to allies Saudi Arabia and Egypt and a meeting of other friendly nations that ring the Persian Gulf, before visits to Israel and the West Bank.

Rice is looking for new ways to improve Abbas' standing in his standoff with Hamas radicals trounced Abbas' secular Fatah Party in Palestinian elections in January. Abbas was elected separately and retains his position, but he has been hamstrung by the divided government and a cutoff of Western aid.

The Bush administration and Israel are increasingly convinced Hamas will crumble, and look to Abbas to capitalize. Rice may ask other countries to do more to bolster Abbas' security forces, and she hopes to breathe life into stalled agreements and talks that would help Palestinians move more freely across their borders with Israel.

Iran's nuclear ambitions will also be part of Rice's discussions, as an unofficial deadline passes this week for Iran to heed a UN Security Council demand to shelve disputed nuclear activities.

Rice said Sunday she may close her trip Friday with a meeting of world powers in Europe to look at what to do next. The United States wants to press for UN Security Council sanctions, but it is not clear she has full support from other permanent members of the council.

BNP readies

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Mannan Bhuiyan told the alliance leaders that they support most of the items of the 42-point demand they had identified in the opposition's proposal.

"We will discuss with our allies before finalising the decision on the opposition's reform proposal," he told the reporters after the meeting.

"I talked with Abdul Jalil today and told him to fix the date and time for dialogue," he said.

Finally giving their consent to the BNP-AL secretary general level meeting, Jamaat Secretary General Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mujahid said, "Awami League should come with open mind if they want to make the dialogue successful."

Earlier the BNP top brass met for the second time to finalise their strategy for the proposed talks and evaluate the legal aspects of the 31-point reform proposal on the caretaker government system and electoral rules, placed by Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina.

After discussing the opposition demands, the BNP policymakers made a 42-point list, some of which can be implemented under the existing rules while others require constitutional amendment.

Health Minister Dr Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, Law Minister Moudud Ahmed, Agriculture Minister MK Anwar and BNP Joint Senior Secretary General Tarique Rahman were present in the meeting.

BNP leaders spoke in favour of strengthening the Election Commission and making it independent, sources said.

However, they expressed unwillingness to go beyond the constitution on sensitive issues like chief adviser to the caretaker government, chief election commissioner, a separate voter list for Chittagong Hill Tracts and the president's advisory role for the caretaker government.

AL to place

FROM PAGE 1
KM Hasan as caretaker government chief and MA Aziz as chief election commissioner.

The meeting reiterated that to realise the reform demands, the opposition would continue its street agitation along with the talks.

Sources said the AL general secretary was asked to justify the opposition reform agenda with arguments and logic. "We will prove it at the talks that meeting our demands is a must in the interest of a free and fair election," said a top AL leader.

Abdul Jalil, also coordinator of the 14-party combine, yesterday said he will join the dialogue with an open mind and is very much hopeful about its outcome.

Some sources said the opposition might compromise on some of its proposals at the dialogue but will stick to its objections regarding Justice Hasan, MA Aziz and three election commissioners, and demands for updating the voter roll