

MURDER OF PABNA AL LEADER

Houses torched, shops looted as protests flare up

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

The followers of local Awami League leader Bokul Sheikh, who was hacked to death in Pabna on Friday, torched four houses, ransacked several shops and staged demonstrations in the district town yesterday, protesting the murder.

A number of supporters, villagers and family members of Bokul brought out a procession and staged demonstrations by blocking roads in the district town in the afternoon, demanding punishment for the killers.

They also held a rally in front of the local AL office and threatened to go for tougher action if the killers are not arrested within the next 24 hours.

Earlier in the day, some agitating followers of Bokul reportedly ransacked several shops and set fire to four houses in Ananto Bazar area, protesting the killing. Police and firefighters later brought the fire under control.

On Friday night, criminals hacked and shot Bokul Sheikh (45), a ward unit joint secretary of AL and a member of Dogasi union parishad, following a clash with a rival group led by one Mokhesur Rahman over establishing supremacy in the area.

Nasim Ahmed, officer-in-charge of Pabna Sadar Police Station, said demonstrators yesterday also set fire to a house of Mokhesur. Additional police were deployed in Ananto Bazar area as a tense situation was prevailing there after the death of Bokul, the OC said.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Abdul Ahad Babu, office secretary of Pabna district AL, said Mokhesur's men had been collecting extortion money from the drivers of battery-run three-wheelers in the area for a long time.



Relatives of patients admitted to Barishal's Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital have laid their washed clothes on the field in front of the hospital to dry. This photo was taken on Thursday.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

Child raped by 52-yr-old man in Jashore

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

An eight-year-old was allegedly raped by a 52-year-old man at a village in Jhikargachha upazila of Jashore on Friday.

The girl's father filed a rape case against Nur Mohammad, with Jhikargachha Police Station, said Abdur Razzak, officer-in-charge of the police station, yesterday.

Police are trying to arrest the accused who went into hiding, he said.

According to the case statement, Nur took the second-grader to a banana plantation from near her house in the afternoon and raped her.

He ran away when people rushed to the spot hearing her scream.

Man killed in landslide while 'cutting hill'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

A man was killed in a landslide while he was allegedly cutting a hill in Sadar upazila of Cox's Bazar early yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Mohammad Rahmatullah (25) of Tetaiya village in Khurushkul union, said police.

Rahmatullah died on the spot after a big chunk of earth from the hill fell on him, said Jasim Uddin, chairman of Khurushkul Union Parishad.

He alleged that an influential quarter is involved in this illegal activity and urged the authorities concerned to take action in this regard.

On information, police recovered the body from the spot and sent it to Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy, said Anwar Hossain, inspector of Cox's Bazar Sadar Model Police Station.

A case was filed in this connection, he added.

Focus on

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Highlighting the importance of observing the day amid the pandemic, the president said, "We are facing many challenges... The government is making relentless efforts to keep the country's economy afloat as well as tackle Covid-19 that has changed the world."

People now can stay connected thanks to information technology during this difficult time, he said.

Referring to government programmes taken for the development of ICT, Hamid said, "2021 marks the birth centenary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and golden jubilee of our independence... We have to make relentless efforts to build the 'Sonar Bangladesh' as dreamt by Bangabandhu," he added.

Changemaking

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oneself in English, published the following day, ended up fetching a whopping 5.5 million views. Since then, Robi 10 Minute School has posted eight video tutorials on kids' English by Maisun.

June turned out to be a particularly good month for her. On June 15, Maisun took part in a World Youth Skill Day event titled "We are echoing Greta Thunberg -- No One Is Too Small to Make a Difference" as a guest speaker. Beside her, the programme featured speakers from USA, Australia, Kenya, and Georgia.

All of this recognition has led to her racking up 170K followers on Facebook and 55.1k subscribers on her YouTube channel 'Maisun's World'. Her parents help her curate and create content for her personal social media accounts.

When asked how it all began, Maisun told The Daily Star it was when her cousins from USA came home for vacation a few years back. "They didn't know any Bangla, so I was struggling to communicate with them," she said, "This kind of forced me to learn their language as fast as possible."

"I practised speaking English for hours in front of the mirror, along with reading English books and watching cartoons and movies. These exercises helped me catch up with the language," she added.

She said she is fond of reading children's novels by Muhammed Zafar Iqbal as well as Harry Potter, Princess Diaries and children's books by Geronimo Stilton. She's also a regular newspaper reader, specifically The Daily Star, she told this correspondent.

It may have been a short journey, but it has been a journey nonetheless, and Maisun has come out of it with wisdom aplenty. "To overcome fear is the first step of learning any language," she boldly said to this correspondent.

Besides English, Maisun said she's also fascinated by mathematics and dreams of becoming a computer engineer in the future.

Two new

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distributed by Jaaz Multimedia. It is running at 25 theatres across the country, including STAR Cineplex, Blockbuster Cinema, Shyamoli Cinema, Ananda Cinema Hall, Chitramahal Cinema and Monihar, among others. After months of inactivity, Shyamoli Cinema reopened their gates with this film.

Produced by Kino-eye Films, the government granted film, "Rupsha Nodir Baanke" is running at STAR Cineplex and Blockbuster Cinemas in the capital. It is also being screened at Shahbagh's Public Library Auditorium (3pm, 5:30pm and 8pm), till December 16. The film features Zahid Hossain Shovon, Naziba Basher, Khairul Alam Sabuj, Chitralekha Guha and Ramendu Majumdar in prominent roles.

The premiere of "Rupsha Nodir Baanke" was held at Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy on December 10. The film will have its world premiere at the 51st Goa International Film Festival, scheduled for January 16-24, 2021.

Several well-known directors and actors conveyed their best wishes to both the films online.

BBDN to launch career portal for differently-abled people

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Business and Disability Network (BBDN), recently awarded as one of the winners of the prestigious Zero Project Award, is launching a career portal for people with disabilities in partnership with Leonard Cheshire, CSID and Bdjobs. The project will be undertaken through the support of UK Government FCDO under the Innovation to Inclusion (i2i) programme.

The Zero Project, headquartered in Vienna, Austria, announced BBDN as one of the winners in the category of Innovative Practices in Employment from the Business Sector for the year 2021. The awardees were announced on the International Day of Persons with Disabilities on December 3, 2020.

A launch event for the career portal will be held on December 17 with the participation of all relevant stakeholders, according to a press release.

In addition, BBDN is working with the Inclusion Works programme, also supported by UK FCDO, led by Sightsavers

and ADD. As skills development of people with disabilities is vital for strengthening the supply side, BBDN is building capacity of model technical and vocational education and training institutions and teachers training colleges, through the support of International Labour Organization's Skills-21 project, funded by the EU.

The aim of the Zero Project is to research and share innovative practises and policies worldwide, by engaging with a worldwide cross-sectoral network of innovators, decision-makers and opinion leaders on the issue of disability inclusion. More than 5,000 experts, with and without disabilities, in over 150 countries have been actively contributing to the Zero Project in the past years. Its mission is working for a world with zero barriers.

BBDN is a non-profit Trust established by the Bangladesh Employers' Federation. BBDN is a group of representatives from business, industry, employers' organisations and selected non-governmental and disabled peoples' organisations.



As part of the countrywide demonstrations, Federation of Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry staged a rally at Shapla Chattar in the capital's Motijheel yesterday in protest against damage of Bangabandhu's sculpture.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Mobile

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WaterAid and Sweden Embassy. Wasa will supply water for each unit.

Floating people, street vendors, pedestrians, rickshaw-pullers, and drivers of public transportation are the key targets for this campaign, said organisers.

The units will be moving in the city's populated areas including Gulshan, Jatrabari, Mohakhali, Gabtoli, New Market, Karwan Bazar, Gulistan, Farmgate, Uttara, and Malibagh.

Inaugurating the campaign at Wasa Bhaban in the capital's Karwan Bazar as chief guest, Local Government and Rural Development (LGRD) Minister Tajul Islam said it will help create awareness among people about the importance of handwashing.

He said the government has taken several steps to curb the spread of coronavirus while private sector, including donor agencies, are also working to combat the virus.

"The government is fighting the second wave of the coronavirus pandemic with efficiency and due caution," the minister added.

Wasa Managing Director Taqsem A Khan said to help people during the dire time

of Covid-19 pandemic, Wasa has come up with different initiatives, including facilitating easy access to handwashing across the capital.

He hoped the initiative will make handwashing convenient for the people during the pandemic.

Hasin Jahan, country director of WaterAid, said handwashing is suggested as the first line of defence and a basic step to avoid the spread of Covid-19.

The campaign is an attempt to reach handwashing facilities to people of all tiers of the society, she said.

It will ensure easy access to handwashing facilities for the people on the move in Dhaka, she added.

She also said primarily they have started the campaign in Dhaka and it will be taken outside the city if the initial campaign brings success.

Muhammad Ibrahim, additional secretary of Local Government Division, also addressed the ceremony.

At least 1,329 new infections were recorded while 34 people died from Covid-19 in the country in 24 hours ending 8am yesterday, according to a press release of the Directorate General of Health Services.

Wasa to

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The idea of handing over ] drainage management to city corporations came to light in July when the two mayors -- Dhaka South's Shekih Fazle Noor Taposh and Dhaka North's Atiqul Islam -- expressed their interest to take over the responsibility.

Later, the decision was taken at a meeting headed by the LGRD minister, in presence of the two Dhaka city corporation mayors as well as Dhaka Wasa's managing director.

Responding to another query regarding the government's effort to free rivers and canals surrounding Dhaka city from illegal encroachers, the LGRD minister said whoever gets involved in such unlawful activities will face action, irrespective of their identity of influences.

No business

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"So, it's now important to prepare a list of those who will receive the vaccine on a priority basis by ensuring the appropriate measures for the transportation, storage and management of the vaccine," GM Quader said.

He also urged the government to remain vigilant so that no quarter can import fake Covid-19 vaccines and make money by cheating people.

GM Quader, also the deputy leader of the opposition in parliament, said though his brother HM Ershad was a successful president of the country, he was branded as an autocratic ruler through a conspiracy and forced him to hand over power in 1990.

After the handover, the country has become a champion in corruption five times during the rule of BNP and Awami League, he said. "But the country never became a champion in corruption during the rule of Pallibandhu Hussain Muhammad Ershad."

He alleged that BNP introduced the culture of extrajudicial killings by forming joint forces and Rab and that is still going on. "But during the rule of Jatiya Party, there's no incident of extrajudicial killing."

GM Quader said it is the Jatiya Party which only can ensure good governance and the rule of law in the country.

Obaidul

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He alleged that the government has been trying to suppress people by creating an awful situation through its repressive acts, including enforced disappearances, kidnapping, killing, rape and terror acts.

The BNP leader said although their party chief Khaleda Zia is now staying at her Gulshan house, she is not free at all. "Though the government has said her sentences have been suspended, various restrictions have been imposed on her."

He said the government has kept Khaleda under the house arrest as it fears her popularity. "We demand an immediate complete release of her."

Meanwhile, BNP standing committee member Gayeshwar Chandra Roy slammed Obaidul Quader for regularly criticising BNP, saying the Awami League General secretary has been uttering dictated words against BNP like a caged bird.

Speaking at a doa mahfil, he said Awami League's political condition is worse than BNP's, but the party now cannot realise it due to the support of the state machinery.

"They're now repressing us using the administration, but they'll be unable to protect themselves if they come under the attack."

He said the current government itself is now at the ICU after being infected with a disease more dangerous than coronavirus.

The BNP leader said the country is also in a very bad shape now due to the current government's 'misrule'. "There was a time when many sick people in our country hardly visited a doctor until they were unable to move. They went to a doctor where there's no treatment left for their illness. I think the country is now at that stage."

He urged all political parties and people of all walks of life to get united putting aside previous enmities, to protect the country from 'misrule'.

Jatiyatabadi Sramik Dal arranged the programme seeking speedy recovery of party chairperson Khaleda Zia, its Covid-infected standing committee members Mirza Abbas, Nazrul Islam Khan and Iqbal Hasan Mahmud Tuku.



One of the common sights of December is hawkers selling national flags and headbands all across the country. With the Victory Day just three days away, they have become everpresent in Barishal City. This photo was taken yesterday from Kashipur area.

PHOTO: TITU DAS