

Armed gang in Munshiganj attacks Hindus: 35 injured

UNB, Munshiganj

At least 35 people belonging to minority Hindus were injured in an attack by a group of terrorists at Shekhnagar bazar in Sirajdikhan upazila yesterday.

Police said the armed gang, led by one Aftab Kazi and Momin Mollah, came Shekhnagar from adjacent Gopalpur at 11am and tried to build houses on a piece of land owned by Kali Mandir of local fishermen community.

The hoodlums first beat and injured one Mahadev Burman as he tried to resist them.

Hearing the screaming of Mahadev, other members of his community rushed to save him. But, the terrorists attacked them with sharp weapons and injured 35 people, including women and children.

Villagers alleged that the armed men also damaged the statue of Goddess Kali.

On information, police from local police outpost rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control.

Local people blamed BNP activists for the attack while police said the incident occurred over a land dispute. "It was not a political incident at all, they asserted."

Debate during hearing of ETV case

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Both defence and prosecution lawyers locked in a debate at the High Court yesterday during the hearing on the case concerning Ekushey Television (ETV).

The debate took place as the prosecution counsel Barrister Abdur Razaq claimed that the ETV was using the Bangladesh Television (BTV) channel for terrestrial broadcasting of its programmes.

But, defence counsels Barrister Rafiqul Haq and Barrister Moniruzzaman argued that the ETV was only using the BTV's tower. The ETV installed its own antenna on the tower and also paying for it, he said.

He also claimed that many of the towers used by the BTV belong to the Bangladesh Telephone and Telegraph Board (BTB).

The debate took place during the second day of the hearing on the case at the high court bench comprising Justice Mohammad Hamidul Haq and Justice Nazmun Ara Sultana.

Responding to a query by the court, Moniruzzaman further said the BTB, and not the BTV, was the owner of the channel.

The court wanted to know how the information ministry gave approval to the ETV for using the channel.

Barrister Rafiqul Haq and Barister Moniruzzaman argued that the power was vested with the ministry at an inter-ministerial meeting as there was no law regarding private television channel.

The court also wanted to know

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HC stays verdict in case against GrameenPhone

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday stayed a judgement by a lower court that declared imposition of charges on incoming calls from fixed phones to GrameenPhone (GP) network illegal.

Earlier, the Fourth Additional District and Session's Judge's Court, Dhaka also declared collection of annual licence fees and government royalty fees more than once in a year illegal.

Judge Latif Ahmed Khan passed the verdict following a civil appeal by advocate Alauddin Hawlader, a subscriber of GrameenPhone.

According to Hawlader, he subscribed a GP Regular mobile phone in September 1997 and according to the tariff plan he was assured that he would need not to pay any bill for incoming calls generating from fixed phones. Abruptly, the GP in a letter informed him that he would be charged for incoming calls generating from fixed lines.

Later, the complainant filed a case with the Fourth Additional District and Session's Judge's Court, Dhaka against GrameenPhone.

The case continued for about three years before the court announced GP's tariff plan illegal.

Hostile hospital

Tale of DMCH neurosurgery ward

NAIMUL HAQ

Precisely at 11:23am yesterday, a young boy with his right ear bleeding profusely was carried by two shabbily dressed men to the verandah of the neurosurgery ward of the Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

There was no one to attend 12-year old Soheli, a trainee at a rickshaw mechanic shop, who arrived in the city from Thakurgaon a few days ago. He was knocked down by a speeding passenger bus while crossing the Jorakamba point at the southeastern end of the city.

Unconscious, Soheli was put on a bench inside the ward, while two doctors were tending to a more seriously injured patient, Abu Naser Toha, a transport association leader hit by two bullets in the head and chest.

More than 20 precious minutes ticked away without anyone having checked Soheli's condition. Abdul Halim and Golam Kibria, who accompanied Soheli, were desperately looking for help but no-one paid any attention.

"Can't you see there is something more serious going on?" retorted a ward boy when approached by the two to have a look at Soheli while he was passing by.

The nervous and hapless men did not dare to ask anyone else for help in the crowded verandah.

Fifteen more minutes went by before a ward boy

called the men to carry Soheli to a nearby examination table. The fatally injured transport leader died in the meantime.

No doctor was there at ward; so, the lone ward boy examined Soheli and cleaned the coagulated blood from his ear and the right side of his face. "He needs an X-ray before doctors can go for any surgical intervention," said an intern who arrived later.

The intern also prescribed a costly injection, which the men fetched from a nearby drug store. Soheli was carried to the X-ray room far away but there was no trolley available.

"We have no trolley now. The only trolley we have in this ward is occupied by other patients. So, the boy has to wait for his turn," said ward boy Abu Sayeed.

At 12:38pm, an empty trolley arrived in the dark and stinky verandah, and as the men were about to place the boy on it, a nurse yelled at them, "Why do you rush? You better wait. Other people are using the trolley for X-ray."

The cleaned wound still bleeding, Soheli groaned in pain, moving his limbs. "Sir, could you please help us. There is no one to attend to this boy," Kibria appealed to this correspondent.

In the meantime, Soheli was removed from the exami

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PHOTO: STAR

Knocked down by a speeding passenger bus yesterday and bleeding profusely, Soheli lies unattended on a wooden bench at the neurosurgery ward of the DMCH.

5 Natore JCD leaders sent to jail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Natore

A magistrate's court here yesterday sent five local leaders of the ruling BNP-backed Jatityatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) to jail when they surrendered before the court.

The rejection of bail prayers by the court for the second time triggered tension in the area, forcing Magistrate Zahida Parveen to leave the court premises under security cover, witnesses said.

On Saturday, Officer-in-Charge of the Sadar thana Faruk Hossain lodged a case against the five JCD leaders under Sections 11 and 13 of the Public Examination (Offences) Act, 1980.

The leaders are Zahir Uddin, general secretary of the N. S. Government College Student Union (NSGCSU), Sanwar Hossain Tushar, organising secretary of the district JCD, Golam Sarwar Guilbad and Anisuzzaman Sathi, joint convenors of the college JCD unit, and Omar Ali, recreation secretary of the NSGCSU.

The officer-in-charge alleged in the case that the leaders of the JCD led by its general secretary forced

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Bhuban killing Hartal observed in Rangamati

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

A half-day hartal called by Paharee Chhatra Parishad (PCP), protesting killing of PCP leader Bhuban Chakma, was observed in the district yesterday.

A protest meeting was also held on office premises of the Deputy Commissioner during hartal hours. The meeting was chaired by Shudhirgo Chakma, president of Rangamati district unit PCP.

The speakers at the meeting demanded trial of people behind Bhuban killing and blamed UPDF for its involvement in the murder.

During the hartal hours, all modes of vehicles were off the road. Shops in different markets kept their shutters down but official activities in the district were normal. Production in Karnaphuli Paper Mill (KPM), Karnaphuli Rayon Mill (KRC), and Karnaphuli Hydro-Power Centre (KHPC) was unhindered in Kaptai industrial zone, Kaptai police told this correspondent over telephone.

Hearing of Shazneen case resumes today

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Special Court for Women and Children Repression, Dhaka yesterday adjourned the hearing of Shazneen Rape Case till 10.30 am today.

Judge Kazi Rahmat Ullah adjourned the hearing following a time petition by the defence lawyer.

The defence lawyer submitted a petition to the court seeking adjournment of the hearing.

The lawyer stated that the chief defence counsel, appointed for the accused Shahidul Islam alias Shahid, could not appear in the court due to his illness. So, he prayed for adjournment of the hearing.

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Tension over reception to Shahriar in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Tension is mounting in the port city centring a 'civic reception' to writer and columnist Shahria Kabir today with some organisations declaring him 'an unwanted person' and vowing to resist the reception.

Against this backdrop, security has been stepped up to ward off any untoward incidents and organisers announced shifting of the scheduled reception venue.

As the authorities refused to allocate any open space for the reception, it will take place at the Chittagong Press Club auditorium, instead of the Central Shaheed Minar premises as announced earlier, organisers said at a press briefing yesterday.

"As regards our request for a venue for the reception, the police administration here behaved in a dubious manner. They played hide and seek, citing the home ministry's directive when we approached them last week. But they gave a different view when asked by media men," a committee leader said.

Those present at the briefing included former ambassador and central Awami League leader Ataur Rahman Khan Kaiser, poet and journalist Arun Das Gupta, President of Chittagong University Teachers' Association (CUTA) prof

Iftekharuddin Chowdhury, prof Hossain Kabir, politician Bakhtiaruddin Khan, lawyers Rana Das Gupta and Kamal Uddin, Mafizur Rahman, Shawkat Bangalee, Rashed Hasan and Mohammad Idris, president of Chittagong Union of Journalists (CUJ).

Meanwhile, a section of people reportedly supporters of 'anti-liberation forces and fundamentalists' under the banners of some newly formed organisations were campaigning against the reception.

They declared Shahriar Kabir 'an unwanted person', vowed to resist his reception and also announced that they would hold a rally on the Shaheed Minar premises today.

In this situation, the police administration here refused to permit use of any open space including the Shaheed Minar premises and also use of microphone for the reception to Shahriar, sparking off discontent.

An organisation named Rashtradrohi Prothirodh Committee brought out a 'lathi' and 'broomstick' procession in the city yesterday evening from in front of the Shahi Jame Mosque at Anderkilla.

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Mob beats up suspected mugger

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A mob beat up a suspected mugger and set afire an auto-rickshaw used in the act near the water tank at Mirpur Section 2 in the city last night.

A gang of armed muggers riding an auto-rickshaw was robbing a rickshaw passengers at around 8:30pm. When the victims cried out for help, local people chased the muggers and caught one of them. The mob started mauling the suspected mugger and set to fire the auto-rickshaw.

Mirpur police went to the spot and rescued him. Police also recovered a revolver from the alleged mugger.

A case was filed with the Mirpur Police Station in this regard.

Meanwhile, the DMP commissioner yesterday ordered all police personnel to take necessary actions to prevent agitated people from executing suspected members, failing which the policemen concerned would be held responsible.

State-owned textile mills incurred Tk 612 cr loss since '95, JS told

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The parliament was informed yesterday that the state-owned textile mills incurred a loss of over Tk 612.23 crore in the last six fiscal years from 1995-96.

Replying to a question from Prof Shahidul Islam (Kushtia-2) of the ruling BNP, Textile Minister Abdul Matin Chowdhury placed this gloomy picture in the House.

Bangladesh Textile Mills Corporation (BTMC) now has 35 mills under it, of which 15 are in operation, 15 are closed and five were laid off.

The House was told that the extent of loss in the textile sector decreased since the Awami League came to power, except in the first fiscal year during its rule.

The sector incurred a loss of Tk 12840.33 lakh in fiscal 1995-96, Tk 15837.50 lakh in 1996-1997, Tk14047.58 lakh in 1997-98 and Tk 6220.05 lakh in1998-99. Operation of 15 mills was halted in 1998-99.

Fifteen other mills suffered a loss of Tk 5279.67 lakh in 1999-2000 and Tk 4576.88 in 2000-2001.

Replying to another query, the minister said audit of income and expenditure of the mills is being conducted on a regular basis.

According to the government's economic survey report 2000, the BTMC-run textile mills had produced a total of 170.08 KGs of thread in the year.

Committee on gas for strengthening Petrobangla

UNB, Dhaka

If gas export through pipelines is found financially feasible for the best use of natural resource the Petrobangla should be strengthened with the proceeds for future exploration, as suggested by a government expert committee.

The opinion came as the national committee on the alternative use of gas held a meeting yesterday and discussed various aspects of gas use, sources close to the meeting said.

The committee said the financial condition of Petrobangla is not good, and it needs to be strengthened, especially if gas is exported from Bibiana.

In case of gas export from Bibiana, Petrobangla itself will have to meet the entire demand of the country until 2024, the meeting observed.

The sources said it also emphasised keeping the block No 11 reserved for Petrobangla. The block has been selected for Tullow, but the second round of bidding has now been suspended since a case is pending with the court.

The meeting decided that it would place before the government the options of alternative use of gas with justifications to go for them, but would not single out.

Meanwhile, the expert committee expressed concern over non-exploration of gas fields since Bibiana was developed.

"The government should take an immediate decision so that gas exploration continues unhindered", a source said quoting an observation of the meeting.

Plan to regulate madrassahs sparks protest in Kolkata

AFP, Kolkata

Thousands of Muslim protestors marched through Kolkata yesterday over plans by the Marxist government of West Bengal state to regulate Islamic schools, or madrassahs, following the recent attack outside the American cultural centre here.

The leaders of West Bengal's ruling left-wing coalition, headed by the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M), are due to meet this week to discuss what steps could be taken to strengthen control over madrassahs.

"There are intelligence reports that suspected Islamic extremists are taking refuge in the madrassahs, whose numbers are growing fast in the villages near the border with Bangladesh," state Minister for Minority Development and Welfare Mohammad Selim told AFP.

The Marxist government in West Bengal has always prided itself on its secular credentials and resisted any

policies that could alienate the state's large Muslim population. "Madrassahs in the Muslim-dominated villages of nine districts along the border have been put under close surveillance. The teaching of terrorism under the cloak of religion in such schools cannot be accepted," Selim said.

"We have also decided to check the growth of madrassahs and mosques in villages and scrutinise those that have already been set up." There are more than 500 registered madrassahs in West Bengal, but the president of the state madrassah board, Abdus Sattar, acknowledged that the number of schools working without official sanction was unknown.

"We do not have the exact number of unrecognised madrassahs," Sattar said, adding that a committee had been set up headed by a former West Bengal governor to conduct a count and review the curricula currently in use.

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