

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 Shekhernagar bazar in Sirajdikan upazila yesterday.

Police said the armed gang, led by one Aftab Kazi and Momin Mollah, came Shekhernagar 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 EKshey 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 (BTTB).

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 Sultan.

Responding to a query by the court, Moniruzzaman further said the BTTB, 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 Barrister 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 Sohel, 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 Jorakoppa point at the southeastern end of the city.

Unconscious, Sohel 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 Sohel's condition. Abdul Halim and Golam Kibria, who accompanied Sohel, 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 Sohel while he was passing by.

The nervous and hapless men did not dare to ask this correspondent.

In the meantime, Sohel was removed from the exami-

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called the men to carry Sohel 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 Sohel 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. Sohel 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 bled, Sohel 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, Sohel was removed from the exami-



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

PHOTO: STAR

Scholarships suspended

Recipients in a tight situation

STAR REPORT

The government has suspended five scholarship projects on science and technology as part of cost-cutting measures.

The move has made uncertain the future of research fellows, many of whom are pursuing higher studies and research at some prestigious institutions abroad, sources said.

The suspension of the five projects offered by the Ministry of Science and Technology (MoST) will save the government Tk 17.29 crore but will affect as many as 80 scholars pursuing higher studies, they said.

Under the projects, the government was supposed to pay Tk 4.44 crore in foreign currencies to fund 22 research fellows of the MoST on four-year study programmes.

Another 30 fellows of the Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission are under study programmes at a cost of Tk. 8.42 crore and another 28 BCSIR staff are now pursuing higher studies at a cost of Tk 4.44 crore.

Of the five projects, the Bangabandhu Fellowship introduced by the past Awami League government in June 1998 is now the most controversial one.

The fellowship was designed to serve political purpose and there were irregularities in selecting candidates, State Minister for Science and Technology Lutfur Rahman Azad recently said.

However, the sources said the fellows were selected on the basis of their merits by a high-powered convening committee comprising the vice-chancellors of Dhaka University, Chittagong University, Rajshahi University, representatives from Chittagong University and Mymensingh Agriculture University, Chairman of BCSIR and high officials of the MoST.

Under the Bangabandhu Fellowship, 22 students were sent abroad for higher studies at different universities in US, UK, Germany and Malaysia.

The government decision to curtail funds would also affect overseas academic career of 30 scientists of Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission (BAEC), according to sources in the ministry.

The suspension of fellowship programmes would give the country a bad image and the overseas universities may refuse to accept any more Bangladeshi students in future, ministry sources said.

A second project on human resource development under the BAEC was also suspended, but it

would affect none since no scholarships have yet been awarded.

Of the 28 scientists of the Bangladesh Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (BCSIR) who have been affected by the decision, 15 are now studying abroad and 13 at various institutions at home.

A researcher who was contacted over e-mail said his dreams of getting a higher degree has been shattered and he now has to come home empty-handed.

"If the name Bangabandhu Fellowship irks the government then it should change it and allow us to continue our studies," one researcher said. "It is no sane decision to abruptly stop funding of scholarships like this."

Earlier, the government had given guarantees to fully finance the fellows in their studies and the universities also enrolled them based on such commitments.

The suspension of fellowship programmes would give the country a bad image and the overseas universities may refuse to accept any more Bangladeshi students in future, ministry sources said.

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 Jatiyatabadi 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 Faruq 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 Guibard 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 Pharee 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 Shudhigo 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 (KHP) was unhindered in Kaptai industrial zone, Kaptai police told this correspondent over telephone.

Hearing of Shazneen case resumes today

OUR 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 Shahriar 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 refused to permit use of any open space including the Shaheed Minar premises and also use of microphone for the reception to Shahriar,"

Meanwhile, a section of people reportedly supporters of 'anti-islamist 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

corporation refused to permit use of any open space including the Shaheed Minar premises and also use of microphone for the reception to Shahriar.

An organisation named Rashtrodrishi 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 (Kushthia-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, Tk 14047.58 lakh in 1997-98 and Tk 6220.05 lakh in 1998-99. 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