

One more ward commissioner gunned down

Followers go on late-night shooting spree at Mohammadpur

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)-backed ward commissioner of Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) and a ward-level BNP leader were shot and killed by unidentified gunmen in the city yesterday.

KM Ahmed Raju, commissioner of DCC ward No. 44, and Sanaullah Haq Nuri, 38, acting General Secretary of ward No. 46 unit of the BNP, were shot in front of the commissioner's office at Town Hall in Mohammadpur at about 11:15am.

They were rushed to the Bangladesh Medical College Hospital. Later, Raju was shifted to the Combined Military Hospital (CMH) and Nuri to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH). Raju died at the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) of the CMH at 7:30pm, while the attending doctors declared Nuri dead on arrival at the DMCH.

Tension was running high in the Mohammadpur area following the killings. Indiscriminate firings were taking place in the area till 10:00 last night. Additional police personnel

were deployed there. Over 20 people were rounded up from the Mohammadpur area last night.

Raju, son of Dr. Mohammed Ali, was a resident of Sher Shah Suri Road of Mohammadpur, while Nuri, son of Halem Ali Gazi, moved to his Rahim Bepari Ghat residence in Katasur, Mohammadpur only on Monday for security reasons.

On Sunday, another DCC ward commissioner, Shadat Hossain Shikder of ward No. 90, was shot dead by unidentified gunmen in the

Chill down their spine

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The killing of four Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) ward commissioners since April 25 has sent a wave of panic among the rest of the commissioners, more so among those with criminal records.

KM Ahmed Raju, commissioner of the ward No. 44, was killed yesterday -- only two days after the killing of another ward commissioner Shahadat Hossain Shikder.

Twenty-three commissioners believed to be at risk got arms licences on Monday upon their demand, with more to get shortly.

Earlier, many ward commissioners appealed to the government for official security arrangement.

The killing of two commissioners in a space of 48 hours prompted the authorities to deploy the paramilitary BDR in the capital last night.

Interestingly enough, the ward commissioners killed or threatened with death are all accused in various criminal cases. And, all commissioners but one were nominated by the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP).

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Sloppy governance irks World Bank

Wolfensohn urges Saifur to shore up law enforcement, lauds economic stability

STAR REPORT

World Bank President James D Wolfensohn was critical of the government for slow pace in addressing governance issues and said weak law enforcement in Bangladesh severely undermines personal security, encouraged pervasive extortion and stands as a major obstacle to any development activities.

"It will take great commitment and a real acceleration and deepening of Bangladesh's reform programme, especially to improve governance, strengthen the financial sector and move the energy sector towards

performance efficiency. The World Bank will be Bangladesh's supportive partner as the country works at this difficult challenge," a WB press statement quoted Wolfensohn as saying.

The statement was released following his meeting with Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman on Monday.

He said the government's decision to establish an independent anti-corruption commission was a significant development, but broader progress in addressing the governance issues had been slower.

He also called for a deeper transformation, especially in improving

governance in the interest of all. "For example, reducing corruption, collecting loans from bank defaulters and reducing power and gas systems losses, were all key issues that everyone recognised," he said.

He commended the government for its early actions to stabilise a weakening economy soon after it took office nearly one year ago.

"We all know what it will take for the citizens of Bangladesh to live productive lives with security, a roof over their heads, food on the table, clean water, health and education for all children," "The government has reduced the

fiscal deficit and reversed a rapid decline in the foreign exchange position. This was urgent work, well done," said Wolfensohn.

"Now, the very long road ahead is the one that all Bangladeshis yearn to travel; the road to good governance and improved law and order. This government has done well to focus strongly on these intractable issues. Moving faster and building a momentum towards success in which all Bangladeshis can have confidence, is an endeavour in which the Bank is ready to be a supportive partner."

Saifur said Bangladesh is com
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10-yr boy strangled at N'ganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

A 10-year-old schoolboy was strangled at Nabiganj under Bandar thana near the town on Monday night.

Imran, a student of class III at Nabiganj Primary School, was killed allegedly by his brother-in-law Kawsar and the body was dumped in a hole at Nabiganj graveyard.

Police recovered the body yesterday morning.

Quoting the victim's family, Bandar thana police said, Imran, son of one Sahabuddin of Nabiganj village, was killed by his brother in-law.

The family said that on Monday in the morning, Imran's father asked him not to go to school.

Villagers told them that they saw the boy with Kawsar in the evening. As he did not return home at night, the family started a search for him and recovered the body from a hole at Nabiganj graveyard yesterday morning.

His shirt was tied up around his neck. Police said he might have been strangled.

Shahabuddin said, Kawsar married his niece a few days back. Two days before the incident, Kawsar had an altercation with Imran's elder brother Awlad over a trifling family matter and threatened the family.

Officer-in-Charge of Bandar police station Jasimuddin said they are investigating the allegation though any case is yet to be filed.

Autopsy of the body was done at Narayanganj General Hospital yesterday.

8 killed as bus hits tempo in Faridpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Magura

Eight people were killed and three others injured when a Dhaka bound bus hit a tempo near Boalia bus stand in Madhukhali upazila of Faridpur district, about 30 km from Magura town, at around 11:45 am yesterday.

Six of the dead were identified as Saleha Begum, 27, and her son Saiful, 6, of village Hatghata in Madhukhali upazila of Faridpur District, Arabindu Sen, 75, of village Brammankanda in Madhukhali upazila, Idris, 25, and his wife Poly Begum, 20, of village Dhuldi in Faridpur sadar upazila and Tara Begum, 45, of village Khalkulia in Baliakandi upazila of Rajbari district. Identity of two others -- a 60-years-old woman and a six-month-old boy -- could not be known.

All the dead were tempo passengers. They were going to Faridpur. The injured were admitted to Madhukhali health complex.

Following the accident, local people put up a barricade on Dhaka-Magura highway, disrupting traffic for about two hours.

Police superintendent, Faridpur, visited the spot.

The driver of the killer bus fled the scene after the incident. Madhukhali police seized the bus.

Govt weighs joint army-BDR raid

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Concerned at the deterioration of law and order, the government is seriously thinking of deploying the army and launching an Army-BDR joint raid in the capital.

Meantime, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia asked her cabinet ministers last night to take all-out measures to curb crimes, according to BNP sources.

Highly placed sources said the government is totally frustrated with the performance of the law enforcement agencies, as they have apparently failed to contain crimes.

They said the recent series of killings in the capital, particularly those of the ward commissioners, have left the government worrying about the situation. It now feels that the failure to nab the criminals has led to the deterioration in law and order.

"There seems to be no alternative to deploying the army to stop crimes. The situation is now almost beyond the control of police," said a senior cabinet minister on condition of anonymity.

He said the government has tried its best to reshape the police and requested them time and again to take action against the lawbreakers irrespective of their political identity. "But we are not getting any positive result and the situation has deteriorated."

Officials at the home ministry said the situation slightly improved after deployment of paramilitary BDR troops a few months back. But the troops were withdrawn following requests from some ruling party members, as many BNP men were arrested.

Besides, a section of the ruling BNP argued that innocent people were being harassed by the BDR in the name of nabbing criminals. There are also allegations that police leaked out information prior to raids by the BDR that allowed criminals to escape.

The policymakers are also thinking of massive changes in the police administration as well as of appointing a 'seasoned and top ranking' party leader the home minister as the incumbent one has proved inefficient.

Peaceful rally at Shaheed Minar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Bikkhubdha Nagorik Samaj (BNS) staged peacefully a scheduled protest rally at the Central Shaheed Minar yesterday as the government relaxed its restriction on holding public gathering there.

The government recently made it mandatory for any organisations willing to hold public gatherings at the Shaheed Minar to obtain prior permission from the Dhaka University authorities.

Fear of a possible confrontation at the Shaheed Minar premises ran high over the last couple of days as the rally of the BNS or agrieved citizens' society, a newly formed platform of socio-cultural organisations, coincided with a programme of Jatityabadi Samajik Sangskritik Sangstha (JASAS), the cultural wing of the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP).

But it was averted as JASAS finished its programme, running for the second day celebrating the BNP's one year in office, before the start of the BNS rally.

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Hundreds of activists of the Bikkhubdha Nagorik Samaj (BNS) stage a peaceful protest rally at the Central Shaheed Minar yesterday without taking any permission from Dhaka University authorities as directed by the government.

US helped Iraq into biological warfare

Germs supplied in 1980s, government records show

AP, Washington

Iraq's bioweapon programme that President George W Bush wants to eradicate got its start with help from Uncle Sam two decades ago, according to government records getting new scrutiny in light of the discussion of war against Iraq.

The Centres for Disease Control and Prevention sent samples directly to several Iraqi sites, which UN weapons inspectors determined, were part of Saddam Hussein's

biological weapons programme, CDC and congressional records from the early-1990s show. Iraq had ordered the samples, claiming it needed them for legitimate medical research.

The CDC and a biological sample company, the American Type Culture Collection, sent strains of all the germs Iraq used to make weapons, including anthrax, the bacteria that make botulinum toxin and the germs that cause gas gangrene, the records show. Iraq also got samples

of other deadly pathogens, including the West Nile virus.

The transfers came in the 1980s, when the United States supported Iraq in its war against Iran. They were detailed in a 1994 Senate Banking Committee report and a 1995 follow-up letter from the CDC to the Senate.

The exports were legal at the time and approved under a program administered by the Commerce Department.

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Shazneen case Latifur's cross examination ends

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Cross-examination of Latifur Rahman, second prosecution witness in the Shazneen case and father of the victim, by the lawyers of two more accused ended yesterday.

After the cross-examination on behalf of accused Shaniram and Badal for about half an hour, the Second Special Court for Prevention of Women and Children Repression, Dhaka, adjourned the hearing till 11 am today.

Judge Kazi Rahamat Ullah fixed the date for cross-examination on behalf of the rest three accused in the case -- Hasan, Minu and Parvin.

Earlier, the lawyer for principal accused Shahidul Islam alias shahid completed cross-examination of the witness on September 16.

Latifur Rahman told the court yesterday that he had filed a murder case accusing Shahid, but involvement of Shaniram and Badal and others in the incident was mentioned in the FIR of the case.

The inquest report was made after filing of the murder case but he could not remember the names of witnesses mentioned in the report.

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Angry staff of the National Zoo at Mirpur yesterday display rotten cucumbers, which are served to the animals. They alleged that animals are often maltreated.

Angry staff shut down zoo

Animals given inadequate food, maltreated

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Angry employees shut down the National Zoo yesterday in protest at the death of a zookeeper in bear attack the day before.

They sported black badges, brought charges of maltreatment of caged animals and placed a 15-point demand before the zoo authorities.

Their demands include Tk. 5 lakh in compensations to the victim's family, a permanent job for his wife and Tk 1,000 risk allowance for third- and fourth-class employees of the zoo.

In another development, a committee has been formed to probe the incident in which two bears killed zookeeper Ismail Hossain Howladar as he went inside their cage to feed

them. Meanwhile, sources alleged that the caged animals often remain hungry, as they are not fed in time. Besides, rotten food is supplied sometimes.

There is a daily allotment of 418 kilograms of meat for all the carnivorous animals in the zoo. However, the supply is far less than the allocation. The meat is kept in water for at least three hours to gain weight, the sources said.

These are some of the findings detected during an investigation into the death of zookeeper Howladar at the zoo between 2:30pm and 3:00pm on Monday.

Some corrupt zoo officials and employees are involved in irregularities at the zoo, they said.

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Hundi links

BB moves to censure NCCBL director

INAM AHMED

The Bangladesh Bank (BB) yesterday served a notice on a National Credit and Commerce Bank Limited (NCCBL) director, asking why he should not be removed from the board for alleged involvement in illegal money transactions.

The central bank has also asked the Bureau of Anti-corruption (BAC) to file a case against the NCCBL director, Mohammad Ali.

In its investigation, the BB has found suspicious and illegal transactions of hundreds of crores of taka through either his account or accounts related to the company he owns.

The BB started investigations into the financial scam of three Marwari businessmen -- Giridhari Lal Modi, Om Prakash Agarwal and Ashok Kejriwal -- on August 10 and found their business groups involved in shady deals and having taken loans against fictitious accounts from different banks. The BB also found out that Ali had links with these businessmen.

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