

EU concerned

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sympathies to the opposition leader over the 'tragic and violent' death of former minister Shah AMS Kibria and four others who fell victim to the heinous attack.

"Apparent failure to investigate previous similar attacks had led to a climate of impunity," Netherlands Ambassador Kees Beemsterboer told newsmen while reading out a statement after an hour's meeting at Sudha Sadan.

Asked about Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan's criticism of EU mission's recent statement asking for a transparent investigation into the incident, Beemsterboer said, "We only shared our concern and dismay as friends of Bangladesh."

Responding to a query, British High Commissioner Anwar Chowdhury said the government should take steps to build confidence among common people.

"A country cannot be run this way. We want swift and credible inquiry into all the crimes," he said referring to the killing of Kibria, the August 21 grenade attacks on an AL rally and another grenade attack on him in Sylhet last year.

Asked about the dialogue, Saber Hossain Chowdhury, political secretary to the AL chief, said, "Awami League leaders told the EU delegates that such a dialogue is possible only when there is a respectable relationship between the government and the opposition."

"The government is killing opposition leaders and workers in a planned way to eliminate us and we are struggling for existence. So how is it possible to go for a dialogue?" he said.

During the meeting, the AL leaders told the EU delegates that they welcome international investigation because they have credibility, but they would not want the

government to use their credibility to confuse the common people and also to undermine the credibility of the internationally reputed agencies by restricting their activities.

Referring to the government recognition that it has weaknesses in administration, Saber said "It is not the weakness of the administration, it is rather the government's weakness towards a certain stream --which is extremist and fundamentalist."

About the 'firm determination' the government has expressed to nab the criminals, Saber said "They make such statements after every such incident, but after a certain period they put the blame on the victims and influence the inquiry."

After the killing of Kibria, two senior ministers of the government - Moudud Ahmed and Mirza Abbas - said in television interviews that Awami League was involved in the grenade attack and it was planned to create a political issue, Saber said.

"When the government high-ups make such statements the people engaged in investigation try to establish the views of their bosses," he said.

The EU delegation also included German Ambassador Dietrich Andreas, French Ambassador Jacques-Andre Costihes, Danish Charge d'Affaires Tom Hansen, Italian Ambassador Pietro Ballero, Swedish Ambassador Borje Mattson and EC delegation head in Bangladesh Ambassador Esko Kentrschynskyj.

AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil, Presidium Member Abdus Samad Azad, former ambassador Faruq Chowdhury and AL International Affairs Secretary Syed Abul Hossain aided the opposition leader during the meeting.

Two students injured in blast, bullet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A female student was injured in a bomb blast at Shahbagh while another student was shot at Rampura in the capital yesterday.

Popy Akhtar, 25, a third year undergraduate of Titumir College, was getting on a rickshaw when a stray hand-bomb blasted on her left leg at 6:30pm.

Popy was rushed to Dhaka Medical College and Hospital (DMCH) with splinter wounds. She left the hospital after taking first aid.

Himel alias Shuvo, 24, a fourth year student of Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Krishi University, was walking home from a garage at Palashbagh when three unknown youths stopped him at 6:30pm.

After a talk, they hassled and at one point the youths shot him on the stomach. He was rushed to the DMCH.

Outlaws threaten

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In letters to Satkhira Reporters' Club and Press Club, self-styled Khulna divisional secretary of the organisation Tushar said the newsmen will be executed very shortly, Ram Krishna Chakraborty, local correspondent of daily Jugantar who received death threats, told The Daily Star.

Blaming Ram Krishna Chakraborty for 'helping police' to nab their leader Kartik Chandra Rishi who was killed in a 'crossfire' with police on January 20, the letters said that he will be executed.

They held Tala OC Shah Mashiur Rahman responsible for Kartik's killing and threatened to kill him too in a short time.

Letters termed seven other journalists 'class enemies' and threatened to liquidate them.

They further asked local journalists not to 'misreport' their activities.

Those who received death threats are: Ram Krishna Chakraborty (Jugantar), Mizanur Rahman (Janakantha), Kalyan Banerjee (Prothom Alo), Anisur Rahim (editor, daily Satkhira Chitra), Abul Kalam Azad (executive editor, daily Patradut), Kazi Dulal (Gramer Kago), Subhas Chowdhury (Bhorer Kago), Abul Kalam (Ittefaq) and Tala OC Shah Mashiur Rahman.

Panic has gripped the local journalists after getting the death threats. Satkhira district administration has taken measures for the security of panicked journalists and police have been deployed at Satkhira Reporters Club and Press Club, sources said.

US still

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request. "No decision on this request has been made," it said.

The release also said that the Interpol team including an FBI agent is in Dhaka as part of the ongoing investigation into the August 21 grenade attacks.

Meantime, Foreign Secretary Shamsheer Mobin Chowdhury told a press briefing yesterday: "We are yet to get any response from the US government."

US Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia Christina Rocca in a meeting with Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan on Sunday said for FBI's help to be meaningful they (US) would want full access to all evidence and witnesses.

The foreign minister on Monday said, "If the FBI is sent by the US government, the terms of reference would be decided by the FBI and the home ministry."

About the terms of reference for FBI consultants as reported in the media, Foreign Secretary Shamsheer Mobin Chowdhury yesterday said, "we were not officially communicated about it."

Meanwhile, members of local intelligence agencies yesterday briefed the visiting Interpol team, on the latest development in the August 21 grenade carnage investigations, said a top Criminal Investigation Department official seeking anonymity. He said other similar incidents were also discussed in the Interpol team's meeting with CID officials yesterday.

Interpol officials, Japanese Hiroshi Sumi and US citizen Marc Beauchemin, at about 2:30pm yesterday visited Bangabandhu Avenue, the scene of the August 21 grenade blasts that killed 23 people. They spent about seven minutes there.

Sources said the two Interpol personnel, who arrived in Dhaka on Monday, are assigned only to assess expertise and logistics required to properly investigate the August 21 incident. Their visit was scheduled eight weeks ago.

Inspector General of Police (IGP) Ashraf Huda told a private TV channel yesterday that the two Interpol members would not visit Habiganj this time.

They might visit Habiganj later if the government seek their assistance in probing the Habiganj carnage.

The Interpol team is likely to meet the IGP today at the police headquarters.

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Cops question

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president Nurunnabi Uzzal, who was arrested Sunday, was released yesterday. However, Sylhet's Jatiyatobadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) leader Kala Jamal still remains in detention.

Investigators say they have the impression that there were five to six people involved in the attack, who were roaming around the Baideebazar area much before the Kibria rally ended Thursday. They had tea at a local tea stall, where some local people accompanied them.

"We have strong support against our assumption that the assailants used a motorbike in this operation," said an official.

Meanwhile the case of the grenade attack and murder has been assigned to the Central Intelligence Department (CID). Munshi Atikur Rahman, CID's Senior Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP), has started an investigation in Habiganj. "I can just say that I have seen the diaries and documents," he told The Daily Star.

The new officer in charge of Habiganj Sadar thana Safuzzaman-- who is also the investigation officer (IO) of another case filed under the Explosive Substance Act told The Daily Star, "I am confident the culprits of this case will be exposed."

Explaining the reasons for his confidence, Safuzzaman noted,

Shibir 'interferes'

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On September 28 and October 2, 2004, the controller of examinations in letters asked the Chairman of MA-2000 examination committee Abdur Razzak Khan to deposit all the examination sheets of MA-2002 in controller's office.

But the academic and examination committees of the journalism department refused to comply with what they said was an unjust demand.

"This letter goes against the university ordinance that says examination sheets would be under control of the examination committee chairman for up to three months after publication of the results," Abdur Razzak Khan told The Daily Star yesterday.

Referring to Azad's allegation of irregularities in evaluation of his exam papers, he said, "The examination committee conducted the examinations strictly under the rules and regulation of the university ordinance. So there is no chance at all for any irregularity to take place."

Another member of the committee said an examination sheet should go to the third examiner only when the difference between marks given by the first and second examiner is 15 percent.

"No exam paper of Azad was sent to the third examiner as the difference in marks given by the first and the second examiner was insignificant," said the committee member requesting anonymity.

The CU administration is allegedly pressing the department also in different other ways.

"The VC has stalled disbursement of a teaching aid fund to the journalism department," a teacher of the department seeking anonymity yesterday said.

Meanwhile, at a meeting on January 15, 2005, the Chittagong University Teachers Association requested the CU administration to take necessary steps to pass the MA-2000 results in the CU Syndicate.

When contacted, the CU VC yesterday denied all the allegations brought by the teachers of journalism department.

He said, "I asked them (examination committee of journalism department) to deposit all the examination

"Former finance minister Kibria did not have political or personal enmity with anyone. That's why we hope that all political parties will cooperate with the investigation."

AKM Mahfuzul Haq, Deputy Inspector General (DIG) of Sylhet range, who heads the high-level investigation committee of the government, points out, "We have good progress in the investigation. But in its interest we can not say anything about it."

"We don't have any arrests yet but we are questioning (people)," he said without specifying how many persons are being questioned. "We are also verifying the information coming out from the questionings. We will do this till we are satisfied."

Meanwhile the Habiganj District Lawyers Association is also investigating the carnage. Khalekuzzaman Chowdhury, the association's president, is heading an eleven-member team that visited the carnage site yesterday.

The Habiganj district Awami League, 11-Party, JSD and Nap are jointly organising a condolence meeting for Kibria in Habiganj town today at 2 pm, at which central party leaders will participate.

Sylhet DIG said the police have taken all necessary security measures. Participants will be searched before they enter the meeting at Shiristala, he said.

papers of MA-2000 but they did not do so."

Regarding reassessment of Azad's examination papers, the VC said, "We are looking into the matter and trying to figure out what to do."

Refuting the allegation of halting teaching aid fund to the journalism department, he said that the CU authorities had disbursed the fund timely.

The VC, on the one hand, claimed that the MA-2002 results of the journalism department were passed in the Syndicate but on the other, he said the university authorities would consider Azad's petition.

PM, Speaker

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says, "Portrait of the President shall be preserved and displayed at the offices of the President, Prime Minister and Speaker and all embassies and missions of Bangladesh abroad."

Talking to The Daily Star over telephone yesterday Speaker Jamir Uddin Sircar said he did not notice whether the portrait of the president is preserved and displayed in his office. He however said the portrait of the prime minister is being preserved and displayed in his office.

"I have two rooms in my office. It may be that the portrait of the president is being preserved and displayed in another room," said the speaker.

He said the parliament secretariat is to look after such matters. The secretary has been changed and a new one joined a few days ago.

Five minutes later, the speaker called The Daily Star and said, "I have inquired about the matter. The portrait of the president was there. It has been sent to be framed."

The BNP-led coalition amid severe criticism by the main opposition Awami League passed the 14th constitutional amendment bill on May 16 last year to include the provisions of preserving and displaying the portraits of the president and the prime minister in different government, semi government and autonomous body offices.

The president consented to the bill on May 17 last year and the government published official gazette of the law.

Spread the mantra

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new criminals and corrupt as well as check the creation of such a propensity among the people," the prime minister said, apprising the function of the steps taken by her government to curb the crimes.

Ministers, MPs, political leaders and leaders of different sectors of arts and culture were also present at the inaugural function of the Amar Ekushey Book Fair 2005.

The formal opening of the fair, a regular annual event marking the observance of the month of Language Movement, was broadcast live on radio and television.

One-minute silence in standing was observed as a mark of respects to the martyrs, who sacrificed their lives in the 1952 Language Movement as well as the 1971 War of Independence, followed by prayers.

Later, the prime minister went round the fair accompanied by the local MP and some ministers and bought a number of books from different stalls of the fair.

Khaleda mentioned her government's stern measures against terrorism and corruption inherited from the past regime. She, however, did not elaborate.

The prime minister called upon all concerned to continue efforts to help the tradition of Amar Ekushey Book Fair, which has turned into a national event, to further flourish.

Hillary

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The junior senator from New York had informed the audience she was feeling unwell after contracting a stomach virus.

"She felt weak, needed to sit down, and then fainted briefly," the statement said. "She received immediate medical attention at the site."

Sticking to her original schedule, Clinton then moved on to a Catholic college in Buffalo where she delivered a speech on health issues.

The senator is widely seen as a leading candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination in 2008.

Her husband, former US president Bill Clinton, underwent a quadruple heart bypass in September.

Witness feels

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gave his deposition before Judge Shahed Noor Uddin of the Speedy Trial Tribunal-1, describing how a group of assailants of Jubo Dal leader Nurul Islam Sarker carried out the attack on May 7 of last year.

He was also cross-examined by a defence lawyer on behalf of some of the accused. He will be cross-examined again at the same court at 2:00pm today.

In his deposition, Ajmat told the court that he was present at the scene of the crime (PO) and recognised the killers of the MP. But he could not disclose the names of the killers to the IO during the investigation as the killers exploded bombs in front of his residence. Moreover, the killers threatened him not to disclose their names or he would be killed, the witness added.

Ajmat also said he disclosed the names of the killers to the court as he wanted justice for the heinous and gruesome killings.

Twelve of 30 accused in the case were present on the dock during the hearing. Of the accused, Kabir Hossain, Ayub, Pappu Sarker and Alamin are on bail while Dipu and 17 others are still at large.

Ministry's

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youths belonging to the organisation purchased 30-35 acres of private land, including the four acres, at Hasharpara in Madankhalia union of Pirganj, and dug a pond on it between 1999 and 2001. But the forest department recently cut down 870 trees on the land, occupied 3.50 acres and also filed a case concerning it.

In his letter, the lawmaker from Rangpur-6 (Pirganj) constituency said unemployed youths are using the land for fish cultivation, tree plantation, and rearing of poultry birds and cattle. The case should be withdrawn considering such employment generating activities, he added.

The forest department in a report to the ministry said however it has 83.88 acres of forestland at Hasharpara, which it received in 1969 and where it is has been carrying out participatory forestry programmes since 1983.

But the youth organisation forcibly encroached upon four acres of the land, despite efforts by the forest department to resist them. The department then filed a case.

When contacted, State Minister for Environment and Forest Jafur Islam Chowdhury said the forestland was illegally occupied, and the case will not be withdrawn despite the lawmaker's request.

The authorities concerned have been instructed to take steps for an early settlement of the case. "We have launched a massive drive to recover forestland encroached upon across the country," he added.

The state minister mentioned that thousands of acres of protected or reserved forestland were occupied by influential people over the years using forged documents. The ministry has now taken initiatives to recover the land through legal battles, he added.

AL mulls

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A section of AL lawmakers do not want to join parliament while others said they should join to register their protest against the misuse of the government, sources said.

"There is very little possibility of our joining the parliamentary proceedings after the speaker's showing hostile attitude towards us," a top AL leader said, wishing anonymity.

"Even if we join parliament to protest the assassination of Kibria, we can't be certain about our getting chance to talk."

"I am personally in favour of joining the parliamentary proceedings to register our protest. But the question has arisen at the speaker's controversial role in the running of the House," AL Presidium Member Suranjit Sengupta told The Daily Star.

The parliamentary party will take the decision after examining all the aspects, he added.

AL lawmaker and opposition Whip Faruk Khan said, "We were in favour of joining parliament. But now we are bound to rethink after what we witnessed on Monday."

"While the opposition lawmakers are not safe in their own constituencies, what will be the result of our joining parliament? Rather we have to strengthen movement against the government for its misdeeds," said AL lawmaker Abdur Razzak.

Kibria's family

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minister will be standing in line in front of their residence. The family would also work towards strengthening international campaign against the assassination.

"We will continue the movement till the killers of my father are brought to book. We will work tirelessly for be it one, two or five years to achieve this end," said Dr Reza.

Without elaborating on the programmes, he said, "It won't be like typical political programmes, rather it would be non-violent but effective."

Meanwhile, top business leaders of the country on Monday night visited Kibria's family in their Dhanmondi residence to condole the death. They expressed solidarity with the family in any move it would take against violence.

Asma Kibria has already written a statement that would soon be circulated among people urging them to join the movement by participating in Friday's protest. "The time has come to take a tougher stance. Express your dismay peacefully and show your solidarity with us," it said.

"I'm making the appeal to commoners for whose economic emancipation Kibria returned from abroad and worked and also to the people of Habiganj for whom he sacrificed his life," Asma Kibria wrote.

The statement called upon people from across the professional spectrum to join the movement to ensure punishment of the culprits.

Reminding Kibria's contribution to the Liberation War, she also called on the freedom fighters and

all pro-libertarian forces to join the Friday's programme.

On prime minister's assurance of proper inquiry into the killing, Dr Reza Kibria said, "We have no confidence in government-supervised joint investigations as those have repeatedly failed to solve the previous crimes."

He demanded independent international inquiry and said, "This kind of investigation would be genuinely independent only if there is no participation by any government agency in its supervision. However, the government should co-operate when required."

The report of the investigation should be made available in its entirety to the public, he added.

He said government's negligence in arranging proper medical treatment and flying his injured father to Dhaka should also be investigated.

Dr Reza said, "We are saddened and distressed that the government is using my father's death to spread more lies."

Referring to prime minister's claim in parliament that she had wanted to pay a visit to Kibria's family, he said, "No permission is required to visit a bereaved family, but in any case we did not know of any such request."

"Much more important than any such gesture and a few meaningless phrases would be real action on her part to bring my father's killers to justice. If she did this there would be no need to come to us -- we would ourselves go to her office to thank her," he added.

Nepali king sacks govt

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citizens, state-run radio and television said.

Gyanendra, who sacked prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba for the second time in two years, pledged to "restore democracy and law and order in the country in the next three years."

"For the larger interest of the Nepalese general public, the nation and democracy and people's fundamentals rights, we have decided to form a new government under my own chairmanship," he said.

State radio said the king had suspended some articles of the 1991 constitution but did not say which ones. Article 127 allows the monarch to "remove difficulties in government."

Political leaders accused Gyanendra, who ascended the throne after a palace massacre in 2001, of carrying out a coup.

"The king's actions against the all-party government mark a state of coup against democratic practices," said education and sports minister Bimalendra Nidhi.

The ousted prime minister issued a statement accusing the king of "a flagrant violation of the constitution of Nepal."

"It is an anti-democratic step and we strongly denounce this act. This step has thrown the country into a grave crisis," he said.

"Various political leaders including the prime minister and the secretary-general of the NCP-UML Madhav Kumar Nepal have been put under house arrest," Deuba added.

The Nepali Congress Democratic Party-United Marxist Leninist voiced strong objections to its leaders being kept indoors.

Deuba's party, the Nepali Congress Democratic Party, issued an appeal for broad opposition to the king's move "for the cause of the nation, democracy and constitution."

The ex-prime minister's statement was handed out by party

Six cases filed

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BNP President advocate Ashifa Ashraf Pappya in her case filed with a magistrate court in the district alleged that Mansur gave the threat in a Sylhet meeting held on January 30.

Following a report published in the daily Inqilab, the complainant quoted Mansur as saying, "Khaleda Zia will meet the fate of Ziaur Rahman if the killers of Shah AMS Kibria are not tried properly."

Following the case under sections 500 and 506(2), Magistrate Sarwar Murshid ordered a judicial inquiry by another Magistrate Protap Chandra Roy and asked to submit the inquiry report within March 6.

Pappya told The Daily Star over cellphone that she would launch a movement protesting the threat from today at Chapainawabganj.

"We will hold a procession and meeting protesting the threat," she said.

Natore district BNP General Secretary Shahidul Islam Bachchu in his case under sections 500 and 506(2) also mentioned Mansur's threat on the PM as published in the newspaper.

Magistrate Mehdi Hasan ordered a police investigation by February 17.

Bachchu told The Daily Star last evening that he also demanded Tk 1 crore as compensation from Mansur, for his comment frightened BNP leaders and workers throughout the country.

Talking to The Daily Star, Sultan Muhammad Mansur denied the allegations and said the cases are part of the government's actions to harass top opposition leaders.

supporters to journalists waiting outside his residence where guards stopped visitors from entering.

Witnesses and Deuba's supporters said several government ministers, particularly those from the Nepal Congress Democratic Party, were escorted away by security personnel to an unknown destination.

Troops and armed police patrolled the streets and surrounded the palace and other key sites such as government buildings.

Residents of Kathmandu reached by telephone said outgoing landline telephone and mobile phone links were cut.

The Indian government voiced "grave concern" Tuesday after King Gyanendra sacked the government and declared a state of emergency in neighbouring Nepal.

"These developments constitute a serious setback to the cause of democracy in Nepal and cannot but be a cause of grave concern to India," the foreign ministry said in a statement.

The king accused political parties of "indulging in factional fighting."

"All the democratic forces and political leaders should have united to protect the country's democracy," Gyanendra said in a half-hour speech.

"Innocent children were found massacred and the government could not achieve any important and effective results. The crown traditionally is held responsible for the protection of national sovereignty, democracy and people's right to live peacefully," he said.

Deuba had promised to hold long-postponed elections after the rebels, fighting to set up a communist republic, failed to respond to his mid-January ultimatum to talk peace.