

Top city AL leader

FROM PAGE 1 Khorshed, 45, minutes after he came out of his 180/A, Tejgunipara house at about 9:45am. The assailants sped off in a CNG-run autorickshaw in which they came, leaving him dead on the spot.

He took at least nine bullets in the forehead, throat, chest, abdomen and one of his legs.

The motive behind the cold-blooded murder could not be immediately known.

The slaying sparked huge protests by hundreds of locals, and AL leaders and activists, who demonstrated against the government and demanded arrest and punishment to the killers.

The rampaging protestors vandalised a good number of vehicles on Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue and blockaded the road for an hour causing severe traffic gridlock.

The police clubbed the demonstrators, touching off a pitched battle between the law-enforcers and the agitators, who rained stones and other objects on the speeding vehicles.

Advocate Khorshed's colleagues in the Court of District and Sessions Judge, Dhaka, where he also practised law, put off their work from 11:00am yesterday in protest. Supreme Court lawyers also stopped their work from 2:00pm yesterday and will observe a daylong work stoppage today.

Awami League General Secretary Abdul Jalil and other party leaders visited the scene and Tejgaon Police Station to see Khorshed's bullet-riddled body.

EYEWITNESS ACCOUNT

Eyewitnesses said three youths started firing point-blank at Khorshed near a phone-fax shop at 153/A Tejgunipara, some 150 yards off his house, when he was passing the area in a rickshaw.

"An old man ran into my shop and said three people were shooting a man and soon we saw a CNG autorickshaw," said Abdul Halim, a motor mechanic.

An employee of a tailoring shop said he heard some 10 gunshots, looked out the window and saw three youths boarding a CNG-run autorickshaw, leaving behind a man in a pool of blood.

Khorshed took a rickshaw in front of his rented house and was heading for the bus-stand to get to the judge's court, the police said.

No case has been filed and the police could arrest no one until 10:00 last night.

Dhaka Metropolitan Police Commissioner SM Mizanur Rahman said they have no clue to the killing. He added that they could not speak to the slain's family, which could have given them a lead, as it was trying to come to terms with the death.

"The motive for the killing will be known soon," he told reporters yesterday. Huge numbers of police and Rab members were deployed in Tejgunipara.

PHONE THREATS

Police sources said anonymous callers had been asking Khorshed to step down from the seven-member committee he headed, which was tasked to pick Kafrul Thana unit committee of the AL. The president and general secretary of the committee have already been selected.

The sources also said the callers had even warned him of dire consequences should he not quit the committee.

AL leader Advocate Sahara Khatun, under whose tutelage Khorshed practised law, said he used to conduct political cases of the AL in 22 police stations in the capital.

"He told me several times of having received unknown calls threatening him in the last one year. Even some of the callers asked him for illegal tolls," Advocate Sahara, also the president of Awami Ainjibi Parishad, told The Daily Star.

"There was no internal conflict and if there were any, I would have surely known," she added.

GOVT BLAMED

The AL general secretary has condemned the killing that he termed political and blamed it on the government-backed killers.

"The government is killing opposition leaders and activists across the country one after another," Jalil told reporters at the place of occurrence.

Leaders of Dhaka City AL staged demonstrations at around 1:30pm in front of Dhaka Medical College and Hospital (DMCH) morgue when the body was brought there for autopsy.

The AL leaders demanded immediate arrest and exemplary punishment to the killers.

JANAZA HELD

The first Namaz-e-janaza of the slain AL leader was held at around 3:30pm on the Supreme Court (SC) premises. Chief Justice Syed JR Mdassir Husain, several judges of both divisions of the Supreme Court and members of the Supreme Court Bar Association attended it.

The second one was held on the premises of the Court of District and Sessions Judge, Dhaka at around 4:00pm, which hundreds of lawyers attended.

Senior AL leaders including Jalil and Tofail Ahmed, and a large number of party activists and people in general defied the heavy downpour and attended the third Namaz-e-Janaza in front of the AL headquarters on Bangabandhu Avenue around 5:30pm.

They chanted slogans holding ruling BNP men responsible for the

Killers of Khorshed will be tried

Babar assures JS

UNB, Dhaka

State Minister for Home Affairs Lutfozzaman Babar yesterday assured parliament that the government would track down the killers of Awami League (AL) leader Advocate Khorshed Alam Bachchu and bring them to book.

"The killers must be identified and brought to justice," he said in a statement on the killing of Advocate Bachchu.

Babar said the law enforcers have already started combing operations at different points to nab the killers.

He said the four-party alliance government has already completed the trial of Ahsanullah Master MP murder case and finalised the charge sheet in former finance minister Shah AMS Kibria murder case.

But Babar was dismayed by the hartal call in Dhaka City to protest the killing, saying the strike would cause sufferings to the common people.

He said the hartal was called within hours of the killing. "Hartal is not acceptable under any circumstances."

Babar urged the main opposition to call off its hartal and let the government nab the culprits.

STAY ORDERS

FROM PAGE 1 court's jurisdiction.

The allegations came during the last working day's session of the 16th session of parliament which was prorogued yesterday. The session began on May 12.

Replying to a question on the recovery of default loans, the finance minister said, "Whenever we take any initiative to recover default loans, the court either issues stay orders or injunctions asking to halt the process."

He said the court sometimes delays issuing copies of verdicts, which are in favour of the government to recover default loans. "When the government moves to recover the loans, defaulters go to court and get a stay order or an injunction."

The minister said commercial banks are now being compelled to fix high interest rates to offset their losses incurred due to default loans.

Seeking cooperation of all in recovering the huge amount of default loans, Saifur said, "Previous governments also tried to recover the default loans, but failed. I am also trying...but this is not possible for me alone."

LAWMAKERS ON JUDICIARY

The ruling BNP lawmakers told the House that the judiciary has been interfering in the activities of parliament.

Monirul Haq Chowdhury, who is also a member of the parliamentary standing committee on commerce ministry, referred to a stay order by court that had hampered a parliamentary subcommittee's investigation of corruption.

"Recently the subcommittee sought information from Bangladesh Bank and the National Board of Revenue. But they did not furnish information as there is a stay order from the High Court on the matter we are investigating," he said.

"The stay order has halted enquiry of the subcommittee. This is an interference in parliamentary affairs," said the lawmaker seeking the speaker's ruling in this regard.

Another BNP lawmaker, Manzur Quader, narrated similar experience of the Public Accounts Committee of which he is a member.

He said the committee has recently recommended disciplinary actions against a number of civil surgeons for corruption. "The civil surgeons have been found guilty in investigation by the Public Accounts Committee, but the health ministry has failed to take any actions due to a stay order by the High Court," he said.

Chief Whip Khandaker Delwar Hossain taking part in the unscheduled discussion said the constitution has defined the power and jurisdiction of the judiciary and parliament precisely. The judiciary cannot interfere in the activities of parliament.

He urged the speaker to form a special parliamentary committee to examine the matter relating to the judiciary-parliament relations.

Law Minister Moudud Ahmed also supported the chief whip's idea.

On the lawmakers' demand of ruling, Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar said, "I do not want any confrontation with the court by giving a ruling."

AGRI SUBSIDY

A number of BNP lawmakers yesterday asked the government to provide subsidy in agricultural sector in the coming budget. But the finance minister said, "We have a plan to give support to the agriculture sector, but I do not want to term it subsidy."

He said the government cannot give subsidy to agriculture due to the World Bank's reservations about it.

When a lawmaker referred to agricultural subsidy in the developed countries, the minister said, "They give subsidy from their own money. But we take money from the World Bank and it told us not to give subsidy from its money."

In reply to another question, the minister told the House that the government has repaid foreign loan of Tk 3,304 crore in the 2003-04 fiscal year including an interest of Tk 960 crore.

He said per capita income in Bangladesh rose to \$444 in 2003-04 from \$344 in 1995-96.



Viethamese Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs Le Cong Phung receives Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at Hanoi Noi Bai International Airport yesterday as she arrives on a three-day official visit.

SC Bar to cancel Sircar

FROM PAGE 1 side the House.

Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar and Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Moudud Ahmed are associate members of the SCBA which has been spearheading a movement for removal of the judge, Faisal Mahmud Faizee, since last month.

The SCBA took the decision at an emergency general meeting yesterday afternoon. The executive committee of the SCBA in a meeting in the evening decided to serve a show-cause notice on Moudud and Sircar asking them to explain why their memberships would not be cancelled.

"Our associate members Muhammad Jamiruddin Sircar and Moudud Ahmed have made untrue remarks about the ongoing protest of our members," says a resolution of the SCBA meeting held at the Supreme Court Bar building.

"They have violated discipline by taking position against the decision of the SCBA general meeting," the resolution said, asking the SCBA executive committee to convey to Sircar and Moudud the decision to cancel their membership.

The meeting chaired by SCBA President Mahbubey Alam observed that the speaker's ruling is "undue and beyond his jurisdiction." It termed the ruling an ill effort to destroy the ongoing agitation of SCBA lawyers.

The speaker in a ruling on Monday said the Supreme Court lawyers' movement against Faizee is a "violation of the constitution." He also said the chief justice can ask the Bar Council to take action against the lawyers for such illegal agitation.

The law minister, on the other hand, criticised the Supreme Court for not taking action against the agitating lawyers for blocking the chief justice's entryway. He said parliament will consider taking action if the Supreme Judicial Council does not take any move about the judges not signing their verdict after pronouncing it.

The SCBA meeting yesterday said the law minister's statement has undermined the image of the judiciary and the judges. His remark is not only indecent, but also tantamount to contempt of court, it observed.

The SCBA demanded withdrawal of Moudud's statement in parliament on Monday.

The SCBA meeting also condemned the killing of its member Khorshed Alam Bachchu yesterday morning.

When the government is politicising all sectors, the lawyers, especially the Supreme Court lawyers, are still fearlessly protesting the unjust activities of the

government," the meeting observed, saying the killing of Khorshed and the speaker's ruling are designed to destroy the legitimate and peaceful agitation of the lawyers.

More than a hundred lawyers attended the meeting which was addressed among others by Faruk Ahmed, Yusuf Hossain Humayun, Khandker Mahbub Hossain, Ozaer Faruk, Abdul Baset Majumder, Shawkat Ali Khan, Amir-ul-Islam, Rafiqul Islam Miah, Rokonuddin Mahmud and SCBA Secretary Enayetur Rahim.

After the meeting, the lawyers brought out a procession with black flags protesting the killing. The procession ended at the Central Shaheed Minar.

Mahbubey Alam addressing a rally at the Shaheed Minar said, "The speaker gave his ruling yesterday (Monday) and a lawyer has been killed today. If we link one with another, we can assume that they want to stop our agitation through intimidation."

The SCBA lawyers abstained from their practice at the Supreme Court from 2:00pm yesterday. They will continue the work abstention today.

JURISTS ON SPEAKER'S RULING

Talking to journalists, Dr Kamal Hossain yesterday said many of the speaker's rulings do not contribute to anything other than creating some debates. "The latest is one such ruling. As a speaker he has no jurisdiction to issue such a ruling."

He said Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar being a lawyer should have been respectful to the united movement of the Supreme Court lawyers.

Dr M Zahir similarly said, "The speaker's job is to maintain the parliament proceeding. This ruling does not cover any such proceeding. He has no rational right to issue such a ruling. I don't find any legal ground for his ruling."

HAMID ON SPEAKER'S RULING

Deputy Leader of the Opposition Abdul Hamid yesterday described Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar's Monday's ruling on the ongoing demonstrations by the Supreme Court lawyers as unconstitutional.

He said the speaker has no jurisdiction to make any ruling on any matter relating to outside of the House.

Addressing a press conference at his parliament office, Hamid also came down heavily on Law Minister Moudud Ahmed for "interfering in functions of the judiciary."

"Treasury bench lawmakers including the law minister categorically threatened the judiciary on Monday," Hamid, also a former speaker added.

EC for authority

FROM PAGE 1 representatives," he added.

The meeting also discussed various issues of electoral reforms and agreed that the EC will complete the reform proposal shortly.

Sources said the CEC at the meeting placed documents of the electoral reforms proposals prepared by the EC during the last caretaker government.

The EC found that the provision of cancelling one's candidature was in the reform proposal of the EC and that the then president Shahabuddin Ahmad approved it by promulgating an ordinance. A month later, however, the president promulgated another ordinance to repeal the provision.

In absence of such legal power the EC cannot take stern action against any contesting candidate accused of violating electoral rules repeatedly.

The meeting also discussed the absence of the electoral inquiry committee, which is formed during the parliamentary polls to work to prevent violation of electoral rules.

In absence of the electoral inquiry committee system, the EC at present can only fine a candidate accused of gross violation of the code of conduct.

The EC now plans to ask the government to make provisions so it can form the electoral inquiry committee in the local government elections.

Eminent lawyer Dr Kamal Hossain, who also attended the EC meeting, asked the government to provide legal power to the EC to deploy army in the municipalities and city corporation elections.

The Gono Forum president also stressed the need for bringing the EC secretariat and appointments under the commission's control.

WB cautions

FROM PAGE 16 new pay structure, she said.

The government is aware of the risks and preparing for an extra expenditure beforehand, Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman said.

"If there is any unexpected turn of events, we shall take measures according to the situation," he added.

The WB yesterday signed US\$300 million agreement with the Economic Relations Division (ERD) on the HNPSP. ERD Additional Secretary Badiur Rahman and World Bank Country Director Christine I Wallich signed the agreement on behalf of their respective sides.

The main objectives of the HNPSP, to be implemented by health and family welfare ministry, are to increase availability and utilisation of user-centred, effective, efficient, equitable, affordable and accessible quality services through the essential services packages, improved hospital services, nutritional services or other selected services.

To achieve these objectives, the programme will focus on three major areas-- strengthening public health management and stewardship capacity through development of pro-poor targeting measures as well as strengthening sector-wide government mechanisms, health sector diversification through the development of new delivery channels for publicly and non-publicly financed services and stimulating demand for essential services by poor households through health advocacy and demand side financing options.

US condemns killing of AL leader

UNB, Dhaka

The United States yesterday strongly condemned the killing of Awami League leader Advocate Khorshed Alam Bacchu and called for promptly bringing the perpetrators to justice in a lawful manner.

Speaking about the latest incident, a spokesman for the US embassy in Dhaka said, "Our strong support for a free and fair political process is well known."

"Only and effective police investigation can determine the motives of such attacks," he said and urged al Bangladeshi to "exercise restraint".

The spokesman made the remarks when asked to comment on the killing of Advocate Bacchu, law affairs secretary of Dhaka City Awami League, and the protest programmes being taken by the opposition party.

He said, "We condemn all acts of violence and urge that the perpetrators of such crimes be brought to justice in a prompt and lawful manner."

The spokesman expressed their "sincere condolences" to Bacchu's family. "We join Bangladeshi people in mourning this loss."

HSC exams

FROM PAGE 16 "We have already given directives to the education boards concerned to postpone the examinations and take necessary measures in the regard," the minister said, adding that the education boards will take the examinations at a suitable date later.

Dhaka city Awami League called hartal today in protest against the killing of its leader advocate Khorshed Alam Bachchu.

The HSC examinations under other six education boards, however, will be held as per schedule.

HSC Bangla Second Paper examination under seven education boards and Alim Hadith Third Paper examination under Madrasa education board were to be held today.

Dhaka University in a press release yesterday said the authorities postponed all the course system examinations scheduled for today at Arts Faculty Building and Cuzon Hall due to unavoidable circumstances.

The authorities will publish the next date immediately, the press release added.

Meanwhile, the British Council in a press release said it rescheduled all GCE, O and Alevel examinations due to unavoidable circumstances.

The examinations to take place at 11:30am will take place at 7:30pm and the examinations at 4:40pm will be held at 10:30pm, the press release said, adding that the exam venues will remain unchanged.

IDA loans

FROM PAGE 16 (HNPSP) for the period of 2003-2010.

The WB will provide the credit in cooperation with a large group of development partners (DPs) through sector wide approach.

An agreement to this effect was signed at the Economic Relations Division (ERD) yesterday morning. ERD Additional Secretary Badiur Rahman and World Bank Country Director Christine I Wallich signed the agreement on behalf of their respective sides.

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3 clerics shot dead in Iraq

GI, 4 Iraqi troops die in separate attacks

AP, REUTERS, Baghdad

Gunmen killed a Shia Muslim cleric yesterday while two missing Sunni clerics were found shot dead, police said. US troops clashed with militants in Mosul, according to reporter on the scene.

The cleric killings threaten to increase sectarian tensions in Iraq a day after Iraqi Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari vowed to crack down on anyone targeting Shias and Sunnis. His threat came amid a spree of violence that has killed more than 450 people since his government was announced April 28.

Insurgents killed four Iraqi soldiers in clashes outside a power plant in a southern Iraqi town yesterday, army sources said.

The attack in Mussayib was part of an escalated campaign of suicide bombings and shootings by guerrillas that has pressured the new government to deliver on promises of improved security.

US troops and militants clashed in the northern city of Mosul on Tuesday, with heavy exchanges machine gun fire being heard, according to an Associated Press reporter at the scene.

US forces were seen advancing into the eastern neighborhood of Dhubbat, a known insurgent stronghold in Mosul, 225 miles northwest of Baghdad.

Heavy machine gun exchanges took place in the area between militants and US forces, said the AP reporter who witnessed the clashes from the rooftop of a nearby home. American helicopters were also seen circling overhead.

It was unclear what sparked the clashes or if there were any casualties.

Efforts to contact American forces in Mosul were not immediately successful; the US military in Baghdad said it was not aware of any ongoing operation in Mosul.

Elsewhere, a roadside bomb blast yesterday killed one US soldier and wounded another near Tikrit, north of Baghdad, the military said.

Shia cleric Sheikh Mouawaffaq al-Husseini was shot in a drive-by shooting by unknown gunmen while driving in Baghdad's western Jihad neighborhood, police Capt. Taleb Thamer said.

Two Sunni clerics were found shot dead after being kidnapped by

men Sunday from different mosques in Baghdad's northern neighborhood of Shaab by men wearing Iraqi army uniforms, a senior police official said on condition of anonymity.

Shaab, a Shia dominated area, was also where six bodies were found late Sunday near a dam. Two other victims were found alive but died later in the hospital. They were among the bodies of 50 men slain and dumped in various locations across Iraq.

Sheik Hamed al-Khazraji, a spokesman from the Sunni Muslim Association of Muslim Scholars, identified the two slain clerics as Sheikh Hassan al-Naimi and Sheikh Talal Nayef and confirmed the circumstances of their kidnappings.

Al-Naimi's body was found Tuesday and Nayef's on Monday, police and al-Khazraji said. The locations were their bodies were found were not immediately known.

An Associated Press photographer saw al-Naimi's relatives preparing documents to retrieve his body from Baghdad's coroner's office, where it was taken.

Attacks among Sunnis and Shias have become common in the past weeks amid fears of violence between the two groups. Dozens of bodies of people from both sects were found in different areas around Baghdad.

Shia cleric Qassim al-Gharawi died in a drive-by shooting in western Baghdad last week. Quraish Abdul Jabbar, a Sunni cleric, was reported shot dead and his body dumped behind a mosque in north-eastern Baghdad on Monday.

During a Monday meeting with Iraq's top Shia religious leader Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, al-Jaafari said his new government "will strike against any criminal who tries to harm a Sunni or a Shia citizen with an iron fist."

Al-Sistani also stressed the need for "fighting terrorism and guaranteeing security," but also urged his Shia followers to exercise restraint in the face of provocative attacks, his aide said on condition of anonymity.

Invest more

FROM PAGE 16 "It follows our Look East Policy that seeks to develop greater cooperation with the countries of Southeast Asia and East Asia," she said.

She told the function that the visit provided her with an opportunity to meet the top leaders of Vietnam and to discuss bilateral issues.

"I am confident that through this visit we will be able to seek out many more areas of cooperation and provide directions to build up a more meaningful relationship," the prime minister observed.

Today the annual volume of two-way trade between Bangladesh and Vietnam stands at around \$20 million, she mentioned, and said there is ample scope for increasing the present volume of bilateral trade to a great extent by harnessing the untapped potential.

She expressed her happiness knowing that seven Bangladeshi pharmaceutical companies are exporting their products to Vietnam and hoped that in future

gies in these fields."

Noting with happiness that some Bangladeshi expatriates are engaged in different professions in Vietnam, the prime minister said, "You are all unofficial ambassadors of Bangladesh."

Khaleda arrived at Hanoi Noi Bai International Airport in the afternoon. Vice minister for foreign affairs of Vietnam received the Bangladeshi prime minister.

Khaleda then drove in a ceremonial motorcade to Hotel Hanoi Daewoo.

The prime minister is leading a 35-member delegation. A 14-member business team is also accompanying her.

Nor'wester

FROM PAGE 1 retarded quick shifting of the injured to hospitals, district administration sources said.

In Natore, the worst hit was Sadar upazila, and some 32 unions out of 52 in the district were affected. Rescue operation was going on.

"I never saw such a devastation in my life. Our rescue teams collected bodies also from under fallen trees," said Sadar Upazila Nirbahi Officer Aminul Islam.

"We saw people were lying flat on the ground as their houses were destroyed and trees uprooted. Crops were also damaged," said a Natore journalist visiting the affected areas of Naldanga in the evening.

Official sources in Rajshahi said standing crops and fruit including mango were badly damaged.

200 missing

FROM PAGE 1 about 3,000.

Our correspondent from Patuakhali adds: With yesterday's recovery, the death count rose to 78. Of the bodies, 35 were found floating in the river and 43 stuck inside the vessel.

Several hundred people including relatives of the missing passengers were still waiting on the banks of the river. Many were scouring the river themselves with boats and trawlers to find bodies of their dear ones.

Police yesterday seized Prince of Patuakhali, the sunken launch, which was salvaged on Monday. They kept the vessel tied to the pontoon of Char Kazal launch ghat.

Galachipa upazila administration yesterday closed the control room at the launch terminal though some police were still guarding the area.

Shimlony Chakma, Officer-in-Charge (OC) of Galachipa Police Station said the upazila administration and police have recorded the death toll to be 60. Of those, 56 were identified and handed over to relatives while four remain unidentified.

He said 25 more were still missing.

Peacekeeper

FROM PAGE 1 Tatakandi at about 12:45PM.

His father Abdul Gafur, 63, a retired army man, received the body as his mother Rokeya Begum, 50, wife Parash Moni, 28, relatives and fellow villagers burst into tears.

Thousands of shock-stricken people attended a namaj-e-janaza of Bangladeshi UN peacekeeper at Tatakandi RKRH High School ground after Zohr prayers.

Nur Mohammad and six other Bangladeshi peacekeepers were injured in the guerilla attack on April 11. He succumbed to his injuries at a hospital at Bunia, Ituri on April 12.

He left the country on August 12, 2004 to join the UN peacekeeping mission in Congo and was scheduled to return home on August 13 this year.