

Woman SC lawyer found slaughtered

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A woman lawyer of the Supreme Court was killed inside her Elephant Road apartment in the capital yesterday.

The victim, Advocate Sayma Khanum, 44, was a former cultural affairs secretary of Dhaka Bar Association. She was also one of the prosecution lawyers of the sensational Shazneen case.

Hearing the news that a youth believed to be acquainted with Sayma slit her throat, relatives rushed to the 15th floor house at Prince Tower around 12:45pm. She was pronounced dead on arrival at Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Police could not find any clue to the murder. They suspect Sayma might have been killed as a sequel to her cases or over personal enmity.

Newmarket police detained her domestic helps -- Mina, 22, and Aleya, 12 -- who were present during the gruesome murder.

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Political party reforms should not be imposed

Speakers highlight need for open environment

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Radical reforms from within political parties are essential for democracy to flourish in society and the state given that reforms are practised in an open political environment ensuring spontaneous participation of leaders and activists of political parties, speakers at a discussion said yesterday.

"Reforms should come from within the political parties and should not be imposed from outside. Flowers may bloom in laboratories and might last for some time, but [those] may not survive in an open environment," said Dr Akbar Ali Khan, former adviser to a previous caretaker government.

He was giving his speech as a panellist at the discussion titled 'Policy Debates on Reforms' organised by Centre for Governance

Studies at a city hotel. Leaders from both left and right leaning parties as well as political science experts took part in the debate over reforms -- a buzzword that gripped the nation after the army-backed interim government had assumed power.

Most of the speakers said that the ones now so outspoken on reforms had never done so in the past and it is questionable whether they are doing it now out of fear or pressure.

A few of the speakers appreciated the armed forces' initiatives geared toward cleansing of democracy in the country. The speakers however insisted on clear demarcation of role of the armed forces and their relation with civil administration.

Dr Akbar Ali Khan during his speech focused specifically on a

few issues regarding reforms including financial transparency in political parties.

"All political parties can be accountable to the people of the country if they make their 'audited balance sheet' public," he said.

On the role of Election Commission, Akbar said, "The responsibility of the EC should be to make the political parties be registered [with EC], but not to control the parties. Involvement in too many activities might jeopardise the EC's primary task of holding the election."

Hafizuddin Khan, another former adviser, stressed practising 'checks and balance' all throughout the government and assuring the participation of political parties in parliament for a more effective democracy. "We failed to

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Joint forces pick up Rajuk CBA leader

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Joint forces yesterday arrested a top CBA leader of Rajdhan Unnyan Kartripakkha (Rajuk) and seized important Rajuk documents and layout plans of 20 buildings from the CBA office.

The arrestee, Abdul Haque, is a BNP leader and vice-president of Rajuk CBA (collective bargaining agent). He is a Rajuk clerk.

A joint forces member said they broke into three rooms on the ground floor of Rajuk Bhaban, which were being used as CBA office. They searched the rooms and seized the official documents and layout plans.

As other top CBA leaders are absconding, joint forces members asked Abdul Haque to explain how important official documents were kept at the CBA office.

After initial interrogation, they arrested and handed him over to Motijheel police.

An official of joint forces said

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PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

Nurses at Dhaka Medical College and Hospital yesterday attend three patients who arrived from Savar as cases of mysterious unconsciousness. They were placed on the hallway floor of the hospital due to shortage of beds.

ACC to quiz Mamun, Quader at jail gates

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-corruption Commission (ACC) will interrogate controversial businessman Giasuddin Al Mamun and his manager Giasuddin Kayyum, Awami League (AL) leader Obaidul Quader and ntv Managing Director Enayetur Rahman Bappi in connection with cases filed against them with different police stations.

Hearing on a 15-day remand prayer to interrogate Mamun in connection with a graft case filed against him with Cantonment Police Station will be held today (Wednesday).

The seven-day remand prayer to interrogate detained former communications minister barrister Nazmul Huda in connection with an extortion case was not held yesterday.

CASE AGAINST MAMUN Metropolitan Magistrate Jagannath Das Khokon yesterday allowed ACC Deputy Director (DD) Zahirul Huda and Assistant Director Ashraf Alam to interrogate detained Mamun, Kayyum, Quader and Bappi at the gate of Dhaka Central Jail about their illegal wealth amassed through alleged corruption.

The order came after the investigation officers (IOs) submitted separate petitions before the court yesterday.

Zahirul Huda will interrogate Mamun, Kayyum and Bappi while Ashraf Alam will interrogate Quader at the jail gate.

Mamun was arrested at his DOHS home in the city on March 26. Police also seized a foreign pistol with eight bullets there. He was earlier convicted in two cases--one filed for not submitting his wealth statement to the ACC and the other for possessing illegal firearms and ammunition--and sentenced to 13 years in prison.

He was shown arrested in 10 other extortion cases. He gave confessional statements implicating BNP Joint Secretary General Tarique Rahman in most of the cases.

CASE AGAINST QUADER The ACC will interrogate Quader at the jail gate in connection with a general diary (GD) filed with Ramna Police Station on March 8.

Quader was arrested in connection with alleged involvement in subversive activities and detained under the Special Powers Act on the same day.

Quader, joint general secretary of the AL, was sent to Dhaka Central Jail on June 10 after he was produced before a Dhaka court on completion of his three-day remand.

CASE AGAINST BAPPI Bappi was arrested at his home on

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53 more students drift into mysterious unconsciousness

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Another 53 students were struck by the mysterious unconsciousness symptoms yesterday at different schools in Magura, Khulna, Satkhira and Bagerhat.

Prof MA Faiz, head of Medicine and principal of Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH), said, "It is a form of psychological disorder called mass hysteria. It is not a disease and will have no long-term effect."

A nationwide awareness is urgently needed right now and people should not be panicked, he added.

In Magura, 34 class VIII students of Basirhat Secondary School were taken to Sreepur Upazila Health Complex after they passed out in their classroom. Fifteen of them however recovered soon.

Teachers and other students were panic-stricken during the sudden collapse of the 34 students, said our Magura correspondent.

Thana Health Administrator Humayun Kabir Molla told the correspondent that the students did not get sick due to any major disease. "... probably they fell sick due to the hot and muggy weather."

Our Khulna correspondent adds: Nine students of classes VI to X of Hasina Begum Secondary Girls' School in Chitalmari upazila fell

unconscious in their classrooms in the morning.

They were taken to Chitalmari Upazila Health Complex for treatment. Four of them were released after primary treatment while the condition of five others were serious, said a health officer at the complex.

A three-member team was formed to probe into the incident.

In Satkhira at Moutola High School under Kaiganj upazila, ten students, mostly female, fell unconscious. Of them, seven were sent home after giving first aid at the school and three were sent to Satkhira Sadar Hospital.

No new student with mass hysteria symptoms was admitted to DMCH till noon yesterday.

Around 12 students of Adiabab Islamia High School and College of Raipura, Narsingdi are still undergoing treatment there under close observation.

Earlier, at least 84 students of the institution had fainted in their classrooms since last Wednesday with complaints of headache, chest pain, breathing problem and vomiting.

On Monday, around 32 female students and a teacher fell unconscious in their classrooms at Polashbari Hajee Joyenuddin High School and were admitted to Saver Combined Military Hospital.



Local administration workers with the help of the joint forces yesterday rescue the Kaliganj canal in Keraniganj on the outskirts of the capital from illegal occupation and dumped garbage.

Cop, informant jailed over extortion

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday sentenced a Sub-Inspector (SI) and one of his informers to two years' rigorous imprisonment for demanding and taking extortion from a contractor in March this year.

Metropolitan Magistrate Mohammad Shamsul Alam of Speedy Trial Court-3 handed down the sentence in presence of the convicts SI Abul Hashem of Uttara Police Station and Shafiqul Islam, the informer.

The court fined them Tk 5,000 each, in default they will have to serve two months more in jail.

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UK orders expulsion of 4 Russian diplomats

Moscow mulls 'targeted' retaliation

AP, AFP, London

Prime Minister Gordon Brown's new government ordered the expulsion of four Russian diplomats Monday over the Kremlin's refusal to extradite the key suspect in the fatal poisoning of a former KGB officer Britain's first use of the sanction in more than 10 years.

Russia quickly threatened retaliation, marking a new low point in Britain's relations with Moscow under President Vladimir Putin.

Russia's foreign ministry said on Tuesday it was preparing a "targeted" response "very soon" to Britain's move to expel four Russian diplomats from London and to impose visa restrictions on officials.

"Our reaction will be targeted and appropriate. British authorities will be informed very soon. But we will take into account the interests of ordinary citizens," Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Grushko said in comments broadcast on state television.

"We are carefully analysing London's official position... with the aim of drawing up and taking appropriate measures in response," ministry spokesman Mikhail Kamynin said in the statement.

Alexander Litvinenko died Nov. 23 in a London hospital after ingesting radioactive polonium-210. In a deathbed statement, the

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40 killed in Iraq violence

AFP, Baghdad

Gunmen dressed in Iraqi military uniforms murdered 29 villagers overnight in the restive Diyala province northeast of Baghdad while 11 more people were killed in two suicide bombings yesterday.

Armed men stormed Duwailiyah and killed men, women and children, Colonel Raghib Rawi al-Omali, spokesman for the Iraqi military in Diyala said.

"Twenty-nine villagers were killed and four were wounded in the terrorist attack on the village of Duwailiyah," he said, adding that

the victims included women and children.

"The gunmen were wearing Iraqi military uniforms to confuse the victims."

The attack was grimly reminiscent of a similar attack in May in the remote village of Qara Lus in the same province, in which gunmen wearing Iraqi military uniforms dragged 16 villagers from their homes and shot them dead.

The Diyala province, one of Iraq's deadliest regions, is currently the target of a major US-led operation focused on the

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Case filed against 12 AL women for procession

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police filed a case against 12 activists of Jubo Mohila League (JML) and several other unnamed activists of AL front organisations for bringing out a procession in Old Dhaka on Monday violating the emergency rules.

The activists of the AL front organisations took out the procession while AL chief Sheikh Hasina was being taken to the sub-jail from the CMM's Court.

Sub-Inspector (SI) Jalaluddin of Kotwali Police Station filed the case with the police station on Monday night under section 3 of the

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Gupta Era relics struggle to find room in small museum

HASIBUR RAHMAN BILU, Bogra

A large number of antique objects from different ancient times including the Gupta Era found at the historic Mahasthangarh site have not yet been preserved in Mahasthan Museum due to shortage of space and modern facilities.

Archaeology Department sources said although the museum, which was established in 1967 at Mahasthangarh under Shibganj upazila of Bogra, was expanded in 1977, it is still not spacious enough to preserve all the antiquities found at the site over the years.

"Only 3,490 square feet area and 44 showcases in the museum are not sufficient to preserve thousands of relics including valuable statues," said a high official of the department in Bogra.

A huge number of statues, terracotta arch panels with inscriptions, ornamented bricks, earthen pots including ancient "northern black polish ware", and metal and non-metal objects from different periods have been stored in a warehouse at the site without proper care, said a senior official of the Archaeology Department.

Antiquities awaiting immediate proper preservation

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PHOTO: STAR

A richly decorated 18th century wooden door discovered in a village of Joypurhat.

Ex-Bogra DC, 13 others sued for Tk 40cr embezzlement

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

Fourteen people including a former deputy commissioner (DC) of Bogra were sued in a case yesterday for misappropriating Tk 40 crore.

AKM Mustafizur Rahman, an employee of Bogra DC office, filed the case with Sadar Police Station against the accused including former DC, Rafiqul Mohamed, and former director of Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation, Shahe Alam.

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3 manpower agents held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) on Monday arrested three manpower agents in the city's Motijheel area on charges of cheating people in the name of sending them abroad.

Rab personnel arrested Malik Rezaul Selim, Habibur Rahman and Mizanur Rahman with Tk 10,000 and two cellphones at 5:15pm on the basis of complaints lodged by ten job seekers who were cheated by the agents.

Of the ten, four were sent to Dubai with fake visas. Two of them were sent back to Bangladesh while two others got arrested.

The job seekers alleged that the agents took Tk 2 lakh from each of them promising jobs in Dubai.

Rab sources said the arrestees had been making money in the name of sending people abroad through a fake travel agency.