

ONE YEAR INTO DEATH OF NURUL ISLAM

Investigators yet to unearth mystery behind fire

MUKHLESUR RAHMAN

A year has elapsed after the death of Gonatantri Party President Nurul Islam and his son Tamohar Islam in a fire at his Lalmitia residence in the city, but the investigators are yet to unearth the mystery behind the blaze.

The fire broke out on December 3 in 2008, killing Nurul Islam, 35, on the spot. Nurul Islam, who was seriously injured in the fire, died 36 hours later.

CID Inspector Shahnur Bari, the investigation officer (IO) of the case, told The Daily Star yesterday, "We could not ascertain whether the fire was an act of sabotage or an accident, as our investigation has not yet been completed."

The explosive department in Segunbagicha and the fire brigade have conducted chemical tests on the samples collected from the spot and submitted their reports.

Both the reports ruled out any act of sabotage, the IO said. Now the CID is waiting for the results of another chemical test on the samples.

"We have sent ash, water and other samples collected from the spot to Dhaka



Nurul Islam

University for further chemical tests. A team of four professors also visited the spot and are conducting chemical tests on the samples," the IO said.

He also added that the CID personnel will soon go to the vice chancellor of DU and request him to send the test results as soon as possible.

After receiving the test

report from the DU, the CID will be able to ascertain the cause of the fire, he said.

When contacted, DU Vice Chancellor AAMS Arefin Siddique said the chemical tests on the samples are almost complete.

Meantime, the CID recovered two cellphone sets of Nurul Islam, which were stolen from the spot, the IO said.

Earlier, an investigation by the fire brigade revealed that an electrical short-circuit sparked off the fire.

However, lawmaker Ruby Rahman, wife of Nurul Islam, claimed that the fire was an act of sabotage carried out by his political rivals.

An investigation by the Power Development Board (PDB) found that the fire did not originate from any electrical short-circuit, she said yesterday.

As the refrigerator had remained out of order for long before the fire incident, and the flat was equipped with circuit breaker, there was no chance of electrical short-circuit in the cable of the fridge that the fire brigade mentioned in their probe report, she added.

She also said the police had recovered the cellphone sets of Nurul Islam, but they could not identify the persons who issued death threats to him over phone.

Talking to reporters at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) before his death, Nurul Islam had said unidentified persons were asking him over mobile phone to come to the path of Allah, and not to take part in the election (the last general election).

Ruby Rahman said some anonymous callers also threatened him to withdraw his nomination paper after he was nominated as the Awami League-led grand alliance candidate for the last general election in 2008.

She also said the CID told her that they could not give much attention to the case due to the incident of mutiny at Bangladesh Rifles headquarters. The case was shifted to CID from Mohammadpur Police Station on February 20.

On the occasion of the death anniversaries of Nurul Islam and his son Tamohar, a milad mahfil will be held at TSC on the DU campus today.

FM assures Asian University for Women of govt support

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Minister Dipu Moni yesterday reiterated her government's full support for Asian University for Women in Bangladesh.

She made the assurance while speaking as the chief guest at a function at a city hotel for a distinguished panel of international supporters of the university.

Terming the university a beacon of hope that brightens the prospects for all, Dipu Moni said: "We will do our share to keep the flame alight and make it brighter."

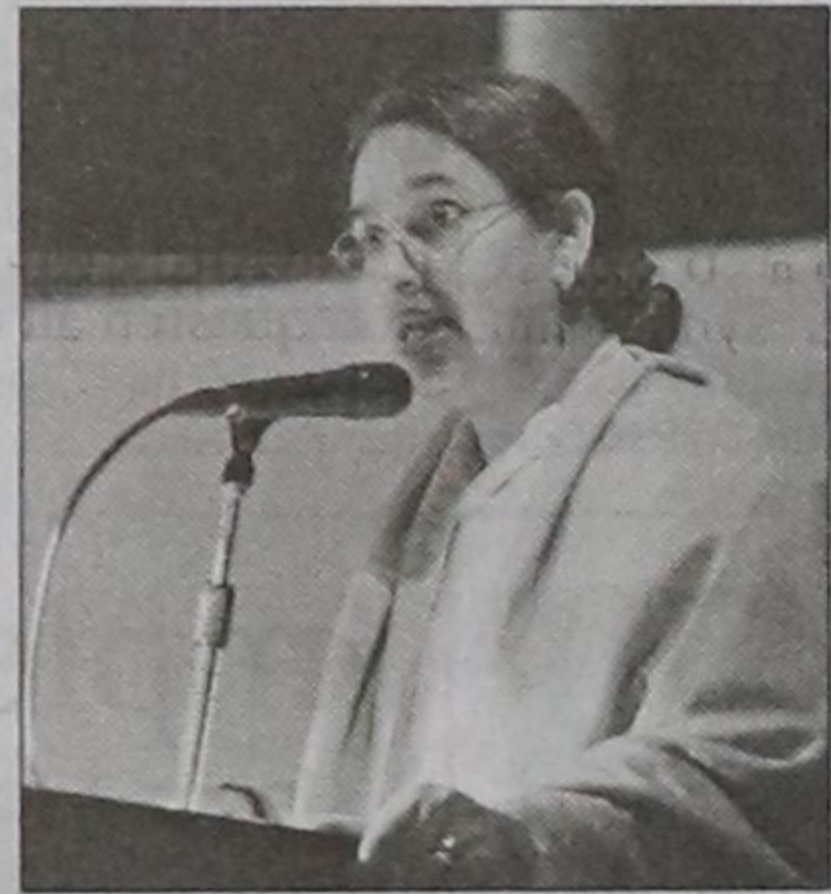
The university is located in Chittagong operates in rental facilities and it is urgent to move the campus to its permanent quarters, the minister said, adding that she has seen the images of the campus model and the first buildings and described them as "inspirational".

The construction of the campus has been delayed due to some pending issues related to land transfer which need to be resolved with the government, Dipu Moni observed.

She said, "On behalf of the prime minister who serves as the chief patron of the university and under whose previous tenure the concept was accepted, we will do everything possible to make Bangladesh the most hospitable place

for this institution. We will do our best to resolve the land issue and whatever support the university may require from the government will be forthcoming from every quarter."

As the first woman foreign minister of Bangladesh, she takes particular pride that the country, which has benefited so much from the goodwill of people from around the world, can now have an



Foreign Minister Dipu Moni speaks at a welcoming ceremony for a distinguished panel of international supporters of the university at a city hotel yesterday.

institution that educates not only women from the host country but also those from so many other friendly countries.

The minister said there can be no greater force for change than a band of women educated and empowered who carry a vision of their own and have the courage to defy and overcome whatever unreasonable resistance that may come their way.

The Asian University for Women is hosting 35 philanthropists from the US, Italy, Australia, Hong Kong, Japan and Kuwait over the next several days in Dhaka and in Chittagong.

The international delegation includes Margot Pritzker, president of Callon Women and wife of the chairman and CEO of Hyatt Hotels in the US, and a host of other dignitaries, including Laura Olivetti, president of Olivetti Foundation in Italy.

Prominent Kuwaiti women rights advocate Lulwa Al-Mulwa has also joined the delegation.

The programme was attended by a number of dignitaries, including British and Australian high commissioners, ambassadors of Norway and the Netherlands and Lauren Moriarty, wife of the US ambassador to Bangladesh.

Literacy, enrolment rates decline Says Education Watch Report 2008

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The literacy rate and the enrolment rate in primary schools in the country have declined, although infrastructure facilities for education and teachers training have increased over the years, according to the Education Watch Report 2008.

The literacy rate of the population aged seven and above came down to 48.5 percent in 2008 from 49.7 percent in 2005, while the literacy rate of the population aged 15 and above declined to 52.1 percent from 52.6 percent, the report said.

However, the figures were 37 percent and 41.4 percent respectively in 2000.

Besides, the net enrolment rate in primary schools came down to 86.4 percent in 2008 from 86.8 percent in 2005, showing stagnation of the enrolment over the last few years after a rapid increase from 1998 when the rate was 77 percent.

The Education Watch Report prepared by the Campaign for Popular Education (Campe) was launched at the LGED auditorium in the city yesterday. The report was prepared on the basis of surveys on 7,093 students from 440 educational institutions and 24,007 households of 1003 villages across the country in 2008.

The report titled 'State of primary education in Bangladesh: Progress made, challenges remained' also revealed that the rates of dropouts and failure in final exams in various classes in primary schools also went up in the last decade.

"The dropout and repetition rates in each class were 5.6 percent and 8 percent respectively in 1998, which went up to 11.5 percent and 10.9 percent in 2008," said Education Watch Working Group Member Samir Ranjan Nath while presenting the report.

On an average, 77.4 percent of students who enrolled in class one could reach up to class three, 58.4 percent up to class five and only 50.1 percent complete the primary education.

Attorney gen, chief state counsel

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identified themselves as members of al-Qaeda, Lashkar-e-Taiba, Joyse Mohammad, Harkatul Jihad al Islami and Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB).

Upon receiving the letter, advocate Anwarul Kabir Babul, a member of the association, informed the association president and general secretary about it.

The association president then talked to Officer-in-Charge of Kotwali Police Station Salahuddin Ahmed and Assistant Commissioner (prosecution) at the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court of Dhaka Anisur Rahman about the matter.

Anisur Rahman and OC Salahuddin asked their forces to tighten security for Judge AK Roy of Special Judge's Court-2 of Dhaka. They said they would investigate the matter and take stringent actions against the persons responsible for committing the offence of sending death threat letter.

The letter addressed to the president and general secretary of the Court Reporters' Association was posted from Dhaka GPO on November 30 and does not have the sender's name on the envelope. The principal post office of Sadarghat received the letter yesterday before delivering.

In the letter, Judge AK Roy has

been charged with preparing the judgment of Bangabandhu murder case, holding trial of four top JMB leaders, drafting extradition treaty to bring back the killers of Bangabandhu from USA and Canada, and sending Jamaat-e-Islami leaders Motiur Rahman Nizami and Ali Ahsan Muhammad Mujahid to jail in Baropukuria Coalmine graft case.

Asked about the death threat, Attorney General Mahbubey Alam told The Daily Star that he had already got two such letters and is not afraid of them.

He urged people to remain united against militant groups and be alert against their activities.

The attorney general said "two political parties" are instigating

these militant groups, who have connections with the killers of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, to run their activities.

Late president Ziaur Rahman rewarded killers of Bangabandhu with ambassadorial jobs. The then Jamaat-e-Islami chief Motiur Rahman Nizami said top JMB leader Siddiqui Islam alias Bangla Bhai was the creation of the media, he said.

"We will carry out our duties to complete the trial proceedings of Bangabandhu murder case and execution of the convicts and establish the spirit of the Liberation War, rule of law and democracy in the country," said Mahbubey Alam.

Kabori, UZ vice-chair Fatema scuffle

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narayanganj

Awami League lawmaker Sarah Begum Kabori and woman vice-chairman of Narayanganj Sadar upazila Fatema Monir were locked in a scuffle during a meeting at the Upazila Parishad office in Narayanganj yesterday.

During the meeting on Food for Work programme in the afternoon, Fatema alleged that the leaders backed by Kabori distributed VGF cards among the persons of their choice, depriving the poor people.

Kabori instantly protested the allegation and asked Fatema to change the topic, sources said.

At one point, the lawmaker and the upazila vice-chairman were locked in a scuffle.

Later, Fatema alleged that supporters of Kabori also assaulted her and her followers and drove them away from the Upazila Parishad office. But Kabori denied the allegations.

In protest against the incident, supporters of Fatema put up barricades on Dhaka-Narayanganj link road and Dhaka-Narayanganj old road.

Fatema is known as a supporter of Jatiya Party lawmaker from Narayanganj-5 Nasim Osman.

Obituary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Abdul Motaleb Chowdhury, vice-president of Jatiya Party-JP of Madaripur district unit, passed away at Combined Military Hospital (CMH) on Sunday.

He left behind his wife, seven daughters, three sons and a host of well-wishers to mourn his death, said a press release yesterday.

In a statement, Sheikh Shahidul Islam, chairman of Jatiya Party-JP and a former minister, expressed deep shock at his death.

Shahidul prayed for salvation of the departed soul of Motaleb and conveyed sympathy to the bereaved family members.

Dada Bhai's anniversary of death today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Today is the 10th death anniversary of Rokonuzzaman Khan Dada Bhai, founder director of Kochi-Kanchar Mela and a noted journalist, says a press release.

On the occasion, Quarkhwani will be held and foods will be distributed among the destitute at his residence at 38 Sharatgupta Road at Narinda in the city at noon.

A milad mahfil will also be held at his residence after Asr prayers.

Friends, relatives and admirers of Rokonuzzaman Khan Dada Bhai are requested to attend the programmes.

Lt Badiuzzaman Bir Pratik

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Today is the 38th death anniversary of Shaheed Lieutenant Badiuzzaman Bir Pratik, says a press release.

Badiuzzaman was killed during a battle with the Pakistani occupation forces at Azampur of Akhaura on this day in 1971.

Ashraf Uddin Ahmed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Today is the 10th anniversary of death of Ashraf Uddin Ahmed, legal guardian of the family of the rebel poet Kazi Nazrul Islam in Bangladesh.

He was the founder of BIWTC Officers' Association and a founder member of Narayanganj Sudhijon Library, says a press release.

A noted Lion activist, Ahmed was also the president of Khulna Club.

Special prayers will be offered at the Pallabi residence of his son today.



Honorary Consul General of Bangladesh in Trinidad and Tobago Reza A Rahman calls on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in Port of Spain on Tuesday.

INT'L DAY FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES TODAY

No comprehensive law yet to protect rights

FARHANA URMEE

The International Day for the Persons with Disabilities is being observed today amid colourful programmes by the government and non-government organisations (NGOs) against the backdrop that the country is yet to have a comprehensive law to protect the rights of the persons with disabilities (PWDs).

Though the government and NGOs are speaking about reforming the existing law regarding the rights of the physically and mentally challenged persons over the last few years, a draft is yet to be finalised in this connection.

The government has been working on finalising the draft for the reform of 'Bangladesh Disability Welfare Act 2001' for a couple of years but it is yet to finalise the draft which was made in December 2007.

A rule to implement the act was formulated seven years after the act but it is yet to come into effect.

Currently, a draft to reform

the act is under the procedure of an inter-ministerial national committee.

Talking about the draft for reform of the act, committee chief Nasima Begum, joint secretary of Social Welfare Ministry, said the government is working on the draft with the help of different bodies to make the act in coherence with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCPRD).

The changes to be made in the act that is the inclusion of the rights of autistic persons, issue of sign language and changing the title of the act but no tentative date of getting the draft to be finalised, she added.

Khandakar Zahurul Alam, president of National Forum of Organisations Working with the Disabled (NFOWD), an organisation working under the national committee for drafting the reform of the act, told The Daily Star that the draft is taking time because it is incorporating a wide participation of PWDs countrywide.

He hoped to submit the draft

to the committee by mid-January 2010.

The demand for reforming the act arose, as the act itself is a discriminatory one by defining it as a 'welfare act' that takes it apart from the preservation of human rights of PWDs. It also entails a number of ambiguities regarding the definition of PWDs.

Experts are of the opinion that the existing law does not differentiate between a mental patient and a person who is mentally challenged. Mental patient can be turned into a normal one through proper treatment but a person with mental disability cannot be cured, as it is a human diversity other than a disease.

The existing act lacks the humanistic approach, they opined.

The existing legal framework for PWDs does not provide the mechanism of the action in case of violation of the rights of the disabled and did not say anything about the responsibility of the government regarding rehabilitation, employment of PWDs of the country.

DISASTER COVERAGE Special training for journo stressed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Media experts at a workshop yesterday stressed the need for providing the journalists with special training for effective coverage of incidents of violence and natural disasters.

Journalists should have knowledge about international humanitarian laws and human rights to report on natural and man-made disasters, they said.

Commonwealth Journalists' Association (CJA), Bangladesh and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) jointly organised the workshop titled 'Reporting in times of violence: Understanding the

context and the actors' at the National Press Club.

CJA, Bangladesh President Farid Hossain delivered the welcome address while Centre for Development Research, Bangladesh and Bangladesh Media Commission Chairman Dr Mizanur Rahman Shelley spoke as the chief guest.

Senior journalists Zaglul Ahmed Chowdhury and Rowshan Zaman, ICRC's New Delhi Communication Officer Surinder Singh Oberoi and its Communication Officer in Bangladesh Rumana Binte Masud also spoke at the workshop participated by about 20 journalists.

Domestic help dies in rooftop fall, another commits suicide

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A teenage domestic help committed suicide by hanging herself in her room at a flat at Gulshan in the city while another domestic help succumbed to her injuries at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) yesterday.

They were identified as Tonima Akhtar, 16, and Bithi Akhtar, 14.

Gulshan police recovered the body of Tonima from the 4th floor of a house at Road No #13 of Section 1. She had been working as a domestic help in the flat of Shamsuddin, a businessman.

The police said they found Tonima hanging with a scarf from a ceiling fan.

Mohammad Ali, sub-inspector of Gulshan police station, told The Daily Star that Shamsuddin along with his family members went to Chapinawabganj to celebrate Eid-ul-Azha. On the day of incident, four domestic helps were staying at the house.

Quoting Shamsuddin's family members, the police said they picked up Tonima from the street when she was an infant. Since then she had been staying with them, police added.

Meanwhile, Bithi, who was working at the house of Dr Saidul Alam, a resident of Bara Moghbazar, succumbed to her injuries at DMCH.

Dr Saidul told The Daily Star that Bithi was injured as she fell down from the roof of their five-storey building on November 30 while hanging wet clothes on the line. She was rushed to DMCH.

Police sent the bodies to the Dhaka Medical College morgue for autopsy.

Robbery in AAG's house

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A gang of robbers broke into the house of Assistant Attorney General (AAG) Bahauddin Ahmed at Mirpur in the city yesterday and made away with money and valuables totalling about Tk 16.40 lakh.

Some eight to ten robbers equipped with sharp weapons entered the house at Mirpur Section 6 after cutting grills at around 5:00am and held family members hostage on the ground floor of the three-storied building.

They took away 60 tolas of gold ornaments, Tk 1.20 lakh and other valuables.

Bahauddin filed a case with Mirpur police station in this connection.

Mirpur police said they have launched a manhunt for robbers but could not arrest anyone.

2 UN experts on human rights, poverty due today

METRO DESK

Two UN independent experts on human rights, water, sanitation and extreme poverty are expected to arrive in the country today on a weeklong visit at the invitation of the Bangladesh government.

Catarina de Albuquerque, an expert on human rights, water and sanitation, and Magdalena Sepúlveda, an expert on human rights and extreme poverty, will have firsthand information about the relationship between access to safe drinking water, sanitation and poverty, says a press release of UNDP.

"In Bangladesh, extreme poverty is interrelated with limited or lack of access to safe drinking water and sanitation," said the experts in a joint statement before starting the country visit at the invitation of the government.

"A better understanding of how they intersect will help us determine how they can be overcome," they added.

DHAKA TODAY

Lecture

Bangla Academy organises a commemorative lecture to mark its 54th founding anniversary. Venue: Nabab Nowab Ali Chowdhury Senate Bhaban auditorium, Dhaka University. Time: 5:00pm.

Scholarship giving ceremony

Mutual Trust Bank (MTB) organises MTB-DUAA Scholarship Awards Ceremony 2009. Venue: Nabab Nowab Ali Chowdhury Senate Bhaban auditorium, Dhaka University. Time: 5:00pm.

Discussion

Jatiya Protibandhi Forum and social welfare ministry will jointly organise a discussion and cultural programme to mark the 18th International Day of Persons with Disabilities 2009. Venue: Rabindra Sarobar. Time: 5:00pm.

Seminar

Bangladesh Nari Pragati Sangha organises a seminar titled 'Status of women in CHT Peace Treaty'. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 10:00am.