

Death of AL leader

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work under an agreement. She suspected that Ibrahim might have been killed following a dispute over the contract.

Two persons took Ibrahim to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) in a black microbus around 8:00pm on Friday and left the hospital immediately, leaving him in the emergency section on a gurney. Doctors declared Ibrahim dead after their attention was drawn to the abandoned patient by other emergency room staff, hospital sources said.

Three days into the incident, police yesterday proceeded with their investigation with a strong suspicion about the authenticity of the case statement filed by Kamal, said police sources.

The law enforcers also seized Shaon's licensed pistol, identified as the weapon that had caused the accident in the case statement, to check finger prints to ascertain whether it had really been in Ibrahim's hand when the bullet had been fired, said Officer-in-Charge (OC) of Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Police Station Reaz Hossain.

He said, "We seized the pistol, the cartridge, the bullet casing and the slug, and sent those to CID experts to examine finger prints and to look for clues to figure out if those were linked to the death."

Kamal filed an unnatural death case with Sher-e-Bangla Nagar police station on Friday night, claiming that Ibrahim had died a little earlier hit by a stray bullet from Shaon's pistol when Ibrahim was handling it inside the lawmaker's car parked at block-6 of the MP Hostel in the capital.

Shaon was not in the car at the time, and the chauffeur was wiping down the car's exterior, the case statement said.

Kamal also said in the statement that he sent wounded Ibrahim along with some attendants to DMCH by "Mithu Mia's microbus", but he did not provide any detail about Mithu Mia or the attendants.

The police sources said

they are also looking into who dropped Ibrahim at the DMCH emergency, and why they left hurriedly without talking to the doctors, and abandoning the patient.

They are also enquiring why Ibrahim was not transported to the hospital in the lawmaker's car, and why the chauffeur did not accompany Ibrahim.

An investigator said they are trying to find out what Shaon and his chauffeur did in the immediate aftermath of the incident, as the law enforcers do not yet have information confirming that the two took proper steps to save the life of Ibrahim.

The Daily Star tried to reach Shaon and his chauffeur Kamal over the phone in the last two days, but could not reach them.

Police had initially seized Shaon's car as well, but later returned it to the owner, said investigation officer (IO) of the case Sub-inspector Azimuddin of the police station.

Azimuddin quoted Kamal as saying that Shaon went into the parliament building leaving his licensed pistol inside the car, which was parked near the parliament complex on Friday night.

When police reached the spot of the incident they found the pistol left in the car, Azimuddin added.

Kamal also told police that he was cleaning the exterior of the car when Ibrahim, an acquaintance of the lawmaker from Bholo-3 constituency, went to the car, got in and picked up the pistol in his hand. And while Ibrahim was handling the pistol it accidentally fired a bullet into his face. The lawmaker was inside the parliament building then, the chauffeur claimed.

Asked whether any case will be filed regarding mis-handling of the licensed pistol, the OC said they did not think of that yet.

Ibrahim was a prospective ward councillor candidate in ward no 56 in the upcoming Dhaka City Corporation election. He had been campaigning for his candidacy through pasting of posters and distribution of leaflets in the electoral area.

Israeli ex-gen says flotilla activists wanted violence

AFP, London

Activists on a Gaza-bound aid boat that was boarded by Israeli commandos were determined there would be violence, the head of an Israeli military probe into the deadly raid said yesterday.

"They (the activists) were committed to kill and be killed," retired Israeli general Giora Eiland told the BBC's Panorama television programme.

Eiland led an inquiry into the Israeli raid on the Mavi Marmara ferry on May 31, which left nine Turks, including a Turkish-American citizen, dead and dozens of others injured, including nine Israeli commandos.

The raid in international waters provoked a global backlash against Israel and led to the easing of a four-year blockade of the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip.

Eiland said the resistance from the activists on the aid boat "was huge, much above expectation" and said it was surprising there were not more deaths.

Congo celebrates independence

AFP, Brazzaville

Some 10,000 troops and civilians joined a parade Sunday to mark Congo-Brazzaville's 50 years of independence from France, but celebrations were muted by the oil-rich state's continued poverty.

A vast crowd of several thousand watched 5,300 members of the military and 5,000 civilians walk through the centre of Brazzaville, between midday to 3:00 pm local time (1400 GMT).

Congo's long-running President Denis Sassou Nguesso was among the spectators, joined by 14 African heads of state and France's representative, Gerard Larcher, president of the Senate.

High spirits on the day are dampened however by Congo's poor development since independence. Some 70 percent of the 3.6 million population live below the poverty line even after seven years of peace from civil war and recent double digit economic expansion.

"Our country will not be totally independent until our people are free of the yoke of poverty," said Sassou Nguesso in the run-up to celebrations.

Sassou Nguesso is one of Africa's longest-serving leaders with his first stint as president stretching from 1979 to 1992 and his current stint unbroken since 1997.

Bangabandhu

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At a memorial organised at the Bangladesh High Commission here, Deb

Mukherjee, Indian high commissioner to Bangladesh in the 1990s, said the killers of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his family members wanted to turn the clock back.

He said he is not ready to accept that the killing was an act of some misguided army officers.

India parliament member HK Dua, who was a journalist at the time of the killing of Sheikh Mujib, recalled that the then Indian prime minister Indira Gandhi was totally shaken as she appeared on the rampart of the Red Fort on August 15 to deliver her Independence Day speech.

"We couldn't figure what had happened and she looked very gloomy that morning," Dua said, adding, "How does it benefit the killers is a question I'm still haunted by."

Prof Rounaq Jahan said it is unbelievable that while India is celebrating its 63rd Independence Day, the people of Bangladesh are observing the National Mourning Day.

"Many of our existing bilateral problems would have been solved if he (Sheikh Mujib) were alive today," the academic said.

Former Indian diplomat Sudhir Deware said the visit of Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to India in January this year has opened avenues for cooperation between the two countries.

"We see tremendous prospects between the two countries after her visit," he added.

Earlier, in his introductory address, Bangladesh High Commissioner to India Tariq Ahmed Karim said anti-liberation forces had joined hands and launched efforts to destroy the secular democracy in Bangladesh after the killing of Bangabandhu.

Karim said the killers of Bangabandhu were not only protected by an act of parliament that effectively destroyed the sanctity of the constitution, but also rewarded with plush diplomatic assignments abroad.

During the raid, police arrested Saidur Rahman and Ruhul Amin, both of them are students of Political Science Department and followers of Awal Kabir Joy, for their alleged involvement with the attack

Biman row

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spend a huge amount of money," he said.

"As per the allegation I received, transaction of huge amount money was involved," in the lease of Kabo jets. He declined to name the persons or amount involved in the deal.

Quader said it is no coincidence that those bringing allegation against him want to bring Kabo Air back in.

AVIATION STANDARDS
Civil aviation authorities in other countries, including India and Pakistan, do not allow old aircraft to fly for safety reasons, the minister noted.

Quader also argued that the Civil Aviation Authority requires adherence to the international rules to remain free of costly restrictions. A "significant safety concern" (SSC) raised by the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) risks doing just that.

The ICAO, following its safety audit of Bangladesh in May last year, identified safety vulnerabilities. The Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) issued licences to air operators without ensuring full compliance with national regulations and international standards, it found.

Earlier, the US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) also demoted Bangladesh to "category 2" for lax enforcement of civil aviation rules. "We will not be able to fly to the USA until we are upgraded to category 1 of FAA," he said.

"If such restrictions continue," said Quader, "none of the aircraft permitted by our civil aviation authority will be able to land at the airports of other countries."

The civil aviation authority of Saudi Arabia also recently said it would not allow aircraft more than 20 years old unless it is satisfied that its check-up was thorough. "(Our) civil aviation authority is under heavy pressure to improve its standards," said Quader.

In December 2008, CAAB restricted the age of leased or purchased passenger aircraft to less than 20 years. But last year's relaxed rules for older planes leased for hajj made sense at the time, he said.

"We were not informed that ICAO raised SSC (safety complaints) last year. As minister, we were new at that time and did not know the details about SSC."

Quader dismisses the Biman board's insistence that the aircraft have had no accidents despite being over 20 years old: "Will you take steps

after accident? No system runs this way."

AIRPORT LAND LEASE LOST
During the previous tenure of Awami League government, nearly 140 acres of Shahjalal International Airport land were leased to IPCO. The company was to finish construction of a hotel and golf course before the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) summit scheduled in Dhaka back in 2002. But when the company failed to complete work, Quader said, the parliamentary standing committee took a hard line for reclaiming the land -- at least for two meetings.

"But the standing committee suddenly changed its tone seeking us to go for an understanding with the company by allocating some land," Quader said. "There are some interested quarters who want to hand over the airport's land to the company."

The minister called the land prime, and noted that the civil aviation authority now also wants it for an expansion: "Biman fleet is expanding while flights of other carriers are increasing. The activities of the airport are growing day by day. Under this circumstance, giving away the land adjacent to the airport will be a big loss."

BIMAN REFORMS OR QUADER RESIGNS?
Quader said holders of important posts or those involved in politics sometimes have an interest in doing business with the institutions under his ministry. "If legal procedures are followed, these issues take a normal course. But if it is illegal they sometimes face opposition, as I like to work following rules and regulation."

Quader said he would neither resign nor concede an inch to the parliamentary committee. "I will not surrender to any allegation made by different interest groups," he said. "Because all the decisions I have taken were to improve the standards of civil aviation. I have done it in an entirely transparent manner," said Quader. "I will keep doing my job whatever obstacle comes."

Quader thinks that Biman should be accountable to the ministry, and that the ministry needs authority to oversee the reforms Biman needs.

"The law under which Biman is running now was made to keep it free from interference from any quarter, but eventually it becomes the source of trouble. Presently, Biman is not accountable to the ministry at all."

PRESS FREEDOM

Ukraine journos threaten strike

AFP, Kiev

Ukraine journalists warned Sunday of strike action over work conditions, complaining of a deterioration in press freedom in the past six months under President Viktor Yanukovich.

Ukrainian authorities "pretend officially to support press freedom but in truth they ignore the problems, professional rights and claims of journalists," the press freedom group "Stop the Censorship" said in a statement.

The journalists published their warning amid fears that the pro-opposition and pro-western television channels TVi, 5 Kanal and Tchernomorska were to be closed down. On Saturday the three channels had organised a symbolic one-hour strike.

"The number of issues where journalists are prevented from working, the number of censorship cases and the pressure on journalists... is increasing constantly," the movement said.

On Monday the tribunal in Kiev will begin hearings to rule on whether the channels TVi and Kanal 5 had legally obtained their licenses.

On August 10, the Vienna-based International Press Institute appealed in an open letter to the Ukrainian president to respect press freedom, concerned by the rise in attacks on journalists being reported and "a climate of impunity."

The European Union, the US embassy in Kiev and the Organisation of Security and Cooperation in Europe have all also expressed concern about the current media environment.

RMG workers

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said workers of Hashim Sweater Factory started protesting at 08:00am demanding August 15 as public holiday, said Nazmul Haque, officer-in-charge of Sripur Police Station.

On information police reached the spot and brought the situation under control.

The workers, however, withdrew their agitation after the authorities announced a holiday.

In another incident, workers of Dayna Composite started their protest at 08:00am demanding their salary of July.

The agitating workers withdrew their protest after the authorities assured them of paying due salary and joined their duty.

DoE for removal

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station is not removed within the given time, the DoE would seize the installation and its equipment alongside realising compensation, told Munir Chowdhury to The Daily Star last evening.

The DoE team during the same drive realised Tk 50,000 from MB Corporation for causing noise pollution at Halishahar and directed the owner to remove the commercial establishment from the residential area within next 30 days.

The team also directed to shift Chistia Paper Board Mill elsewhere from Khulshi area by September 1 as it is running without environmental certificate and a poultry farm from Nasirabad residential area within next seven days.

7 ship breakers

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country's territory for workers' safety.

Moreover, the Department of Explosives provided the safety certificate to the owner of the ship-breaking yard without examining if the ship was safe for scrapping.

Shawkat Ali, owner of ZN Enterprise, defended himself saying, "We have taken the certificate before scrapping the ship".

The ship-breaking yard is running its business for years without any environment clearance certificate from the Department of Environment (DoE).

Asked about the certificate, the owner claimed they had applied for it a few years back.

However, DoE Inspector Saiful Ashraf who deals with the clearance certificate told The Daily Star that the company is yet to apply for the certificate.

Asked about the incident, Noor Mohammad, officer-in-charge of Sitakunda Police Station, said he was not aware of it.

This is the fifteenth accident after the SC directed the government to clean all toxic ships before importing.

In the last 16 months, 24 workers died while at least 24 others were injured for ignoring the court order.

Petraeus holds out prospect of reconciliation with Taliban

AFP, Washington

General David Petraeus, the US commander in Afghanistan, held out the prospect yesterday of eventual reconciliation with the Taliban, including negotiations with leaders with "blood on their hands."

"It doesn't mean that Mullah Omar is about to stroll down main street in Kabul anytime soon and raise his hand and swear an oath on the constitution of Afghanistan," Petraeus said in an interview with NBC's "Meet the Press."

But he said there was "every possibility, I think, that there can be low- and mid-level reintegration and indeed some fracturing of the senior leadership that could be really defined as reconciliation."

Petraeus, who took command in Kabul following the sacking of his predecessor General Stanley McChrystal, famously exploited rifts within Iraq's Sunni insurgency to turn around a losing US-led war there.

He now has less than a year to show results in Afghanistan where what he described as a "Pashtun insurgency" operat-

ing from Pakistan has exposed the weakness of the government in Kabul and the NATO-led force backing it.

But in the interview Petraeus drew attention to vulnerabilities in the insurgency, noting it was "not some kind of monolithic Taliban enemy" but rather a syndicate of insurgent groups that are not subservient to each other.

These include the Afghan Taliban in the south, the Haqqani network in the east, the Hezb-e-Islami led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, the Pakistani Taliban, and smaller numbers of Al-Qaeda and Uzbek fighters.

"What is interesting is that the Taliban leads from the rear, as we would say. The Taliban leads from Pakistan," the general said. "And by the way, the rank and file is just catching on to this."

"We actually see discussions among them, chatter among them, conversation, wondering where their senior leaders are, and wondering why Mullah Omar hasn't set foot back in Afghanistan or even been heard from now in months and months and months."

Nation mourns

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make Bangladesh an Islamic country like Pakistan, diverting from its track of secular spirit.

Since the assassination of Bangabandhu and ten other residents of the house including his wife, two daughters-in-law and three sons, the nation had to wait for justice for thirty-four years. In the meantime, the succeeding army regimes distorted history and the constitution in their failed attempt to erase Bangabandhu from the history of Bangladesh.

The justice was finally done in January this year after the apex court delivered its verdict giving capital punishment to 12 killers and also giving a significant dimension to observance of the National Mourning Day, a national holiday restored by the High Court in a verdict in 2008.

The launch of trial of the war criminals 39 years after independence has also added a flavour of consolation in the observance of the day this year.

Hundreds of people recalled the Bangabandhu Memorial Museum at Bangabandhu's residence, which is reminiscent of the black night of August 15, 1975. Wearing black badges they walked every room and corridor of the residence solemnly.

The road that goes in front of the residence was wrapped in black banners, posters and was reverberated with the historic speech of Bangabandhu being played on tape recorder through mike.

BNP's review body

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A top BNP leader at a meeting told the chairperson that the party statement should not contain anything against the judiciary or the verdict on the fifth amendment, said the sources.

"We have a lot of issues in the court and that is why we should not make it annoyed," he told the BNP chief Khaleda Zia, hinting at the cases regarding her cantonment house and two sons.

A number of BNP lawmakers however opposed the idea, saying the party should ask questions whether the judiciary can interfere in parliamentary affairs.

BNP leader Salauddin Quader Chowdhury said there should be a check and balance between the executive, judiciary and parliament, otherwise extra-constitutional forces might get a chance to threaten democracy. The party should focus on it.

"We all know what the role of judges after 1/11 was. But the thinking of lawyers would be different as they have to deal with judges because of their profession," he said.

Committee member Rafiqul Islam Mia said the scope for talking about the court judgement or the judiciary is limited.

"We have to think what the government will do about several issues like Bismillah and the state religion," said Rafiqul, also member of the standing

The photograph exhibition styled "History Speaks up" attracted a huge crowd of children, party activists, students and enthusiast parents who read the captions attentively as they watched each photograph in queues.

Different government and non-government organisations, educational institutions and cultural and social institutions placed wreaths at the portrait of Bangabandhu on Road 32 in Dhanmondi.

In a corner of Bangabandhu's residence, 53-year-old visually disabled Hafez Shaheb Ali was reciting from the Holy Quran. Since 1969 Bangabandhu used to take care of Shaheb Ali by giving him Tk 15 every week.

On completion of his education, Bangabandhu arranged his accommodation in a building adjacent to his own.

Shaheb Ali, who hailed from Tungipara, home village of Bangabandhu, lived with the father of the nation till August 15, 1975. On the night of the assassination, he was attending the birthday ceremony of his cousin's daughter in Kamalapur.

"I will not be fully satisfied until the fugitive killers of Bangabandhu are brought to justice," says Shaheb Ali. Out of the 12 condemned killers, five were hanged, one died abroad earlier, while six are still hiding in different countries.

"I come here often out of my debt to Bangabandhu," adds Shaheb Ali before he immersed himself in the rhythm of the Quran verses.

Poverty-free

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Bangabandhu Mazar Complex to distribute sewing machines among the economically vulnerable women.

Eighty women were given the sewing machines after a two-month-long training arranged by the district administration.

The PM thanked the Gopalganj district administration for arranging such income-oriented programme.

She expressed the hope that other district administrations will also come up with similar innovative programmes to help remove employment crisis in the society.

Hasina said that Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman throughout his whole life continued politics for socio-economic and political emancipation of the people.

"Bangladesh has achieved independence under the leadership of the Father of the Nation. Now we have to achieve economic emancipation of the people," she said.

The premier said that her government is working with various programmes to create social safety net including empowering the country's women community by provid-

ing employment.

Mentioning the government's "one house, one farm" project, she said the present government is strongly committed to removing unemployment from the country. "Concept of various development programmes being run by the present government has been taken from Bangabandhu's government."

About the Gopalganj district administration's programme to providing the women with sewing machine, the PM stressed ensuring proper and profitable marketing of the products to be produced by these women.

In this regard, she suggested association-based marketing of the products.

Every capable person including the women would have to be involved in productive activities to strengthen the country's economy, Hasina said.

"We want such a Bangladesh where not a single woman sits idle at home," she said.

Earlier, in the morning, the PM placed wreath at the grave of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at Tungipara.

3rd seaport

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will begin by 2012 with an estimated cost of Tk 2500 crore that includes the construction cost of some 34 km link road, a shipping ministry official said.

The source of funding, however, is still unknown but the government is likely to approach foreign donors, said the official, who sought anonymity on the ground that it is too early to comment.

Under the transit agreements with India and Nepal, Bangladesh expects some five lakh containers a year from these two countries and possibly from Bhutan. Once in operation, the port will handle nearly half of these containers, he said.

The government move came following a meeting of the parliamentary standing committee on shipping ministry that suggested building a third seaport in Patuakhali region earlier this year.

resources Mahbubur Rahman, also a member of the committee, wrote a letter to the shipping ministry suggesting to undertake initiatives in this regard following the meeting.

The shipping minister then visited the proposed site on May 21 this year and said at a rally that the government is planning to build a seaport there.

It would be wise for the government to establish a third seaport in the Patuakhali region, Rahman, a lawmaker for Patuakhali-4 constituency, said in his letter to the shipping ministry.

It will help develop the economic condition of the people in this underdeveloped coastal area, the letter stated.

According to the government district port, the total population in Patuakhali district is 15,37,137 mostly depending on agriculture, fishing and rearing livestock.