

Teacher buried

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Bagatipara upazila, was laid to rest at his family graveyard at Chalk Laxmipur in Charghat, Rajshahi yesterday morning.

Hundreds of people turned up to show their respect and also register their anger for the death of Mizanur, who was severely beaten up on October 12 for his protest against eve-teasing.

With the sole bread earner dead, the shocked and bereaved family of five has sought the prime minister's intervention for their survival and punishment of the killers.

Mizan's mother Jahera Begum expressed her frustration as Mizan was the only earning member of the family since his father died in 2000.

Sixty-two-year old Shawkat Alam, Mizanur's father-in-law, said he does not know how to feed the family with his Tk 4,000 monthly pension.

"Even if I can manage their food somehow, how will I educate my granddaughter?" asked the Alam, who sees a bleak future ahead.

ASSURANCE FROM PMO
The Prime Minister's Office has meanwhile pledged a job for Mizanur's wife Razia Sultana Mili, who has a master's in political science.

Additional District Magistrate Sitara Begum visited Razia at her house in Lokmanpur yesterday and collected copies of her certificates for necessary action.

THE ACCUSED
Mamunur Rashid Asif, another accused in the case, who was riding the bike, was arrested on October 20.

Local AL leader Majedur Rahman Chand claims Rajon and his family belong to the ruling party. But locals say both the accused were activists of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra

Dal, associate student body of main opposition BNP, but changed their tune as AL assumed power.

According to police, Rajon is an accused in another murder case in Bagatipara in 2008 and was on bail.

Five months ago Rajon forcibly married Asif's sister and made Asif his partner in stalking in the locality.

Asif's father Golam Rasul said his brothers bought Asif a motorcycle three months ago. "He did not kill Mizanur. It was just an accident," he claims.

Mizan's colleague and eyewitness Faruk Hossain said one may term it an accident though the speeding motorcycle intentionally hit Mizan, who was sitting on his bike.

"But what about the beating afterwards? Was it an accident too when Rajon beat him up with an iron rod?" Faruk asked.

Motiu Rahman, principal of Lokmanpur College, said Mizanur was very popular among teachers and students. That is why two students had complained to him about the stalkers, who were rebuked and warned by Mizan.

Fighting for life for 12 days, Mizan died at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University Hospital early Sunday.

His first namaz-e-janaza was held on the premises of Lokmanpur High School around 8:15am. Hundreds of people attended the second namaz-e-janaza held at Chalk Laxmipur High School field around 11:00am.

Talking to The Daily Star, Nasirul Islam, acting superintendent of police in Natore, said they are applying all modern methods to trap Rajon.

Pope urges ME sides to reach peace

BBC ONLINE

Pope Benedict XVI has urged Israelis and Palestinians to push for peace in the Middle East and not to give up hope of a settlement.

He spoke at the Vatican at the end of a two-week meeting of Catholic bishops from around the world.

Peace would be the best way to stem the emigration of Christians from the Middle East, the Pope said.

Separately, Israel's prime minister has called on Palestinians not pursue independence without peace talks.

Frustrated that direct talks with Israel have stalled over the issue of Jewish settlement construction, Palestinians have suggested they could ask the United Nations to recognise an independent state beyond the Green Line - territories occupied by Israel since the 1967 Middle East war.

Speaking before the start of Israel's weekly cabinet meeting, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said face-to-face talks were the best option.

"I think any attempt to circumvent it by going to international bodies isn't realistic and won't advance true peacemaking in any way. Peace will be achieved only through direct talks."

In Rome, Pope Benedict used clear language in his Sunday homily: "Peace is possible. Peace is urgent."

"Peace is also the best remedy to avoid the emigration from the Middle East."

His words came after a declaration by the conference that said the international community should take "the necessary legal steps to put an end to the occupation of the different Arab territories".

Palastinians seized on the declaration as evidence of the "moral and legal" justification for an independent Palestinian state.

"We join the synod in their call to the international community to uphold the universal values of freedom, dignity and justice," chief Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat said.

Burial

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local graveyard around 1:00am yesterday giving the family members and villagers very little time to see his body. Relatives and neighbours alleged that police barred them from attending his namaz-e-janaza and burial.

His body was taken to his Harina Nodir Par village home under Kayetpara union around 12:15am yesterday.

Md Forkan Sikder, officer-in-charge of Rupganj Police Station, however, denied the allegation. He said police and "representatives" of the people participated the funeral.

Mostafa's father Md Abdur Rafiq told The Daily Star that police drove away the villagers threatening to arrest them.

Apart from himself, one of his brothers and 15 to 20 villagers were allowed to attend the namaz-e-janaza and the rest were police personnel and administration officials, he said.

"I waited for almost 10 hours at the hospital to get my son's body. On receiving, police didn't give us time for ablutions to attend the janaza. I don't understand why they wanted to bury my son so hurriedly."

Meanwhile, tension and panic have gripped Rupganj.

Most males in Rupganj and Kayetpara unions fled homes to avoid arrest.

Police filed a case against some 3,000 unidentified villagers following the clash between locals and law enforcers over "forcible purchase of land" for an army housing project in the area.

But Rafiq does not fear arrest. He fears to lose more if he files a case to seek justice for his son's death.

"When the funeral of my son wasn't in my hands, how can I expect punishment to his killers? They are very influential people," he said when asked whether he will lodge a case in this connection.

He said the money he will spend to go to the police station to file the case will be a total loss since he knows he will not get justice.

"I've already lost one of my three children and I don't want to lose anything more," he said, his blank eyes fixed outside the window.

He said his son was killed by bullets shot by the army, and the theory of police and Rab opening fire on the villagers is "totally wrong".

Rupganj police told The Daily Star on Sunday that they did not open fire on people.

Rafiq and Shahhaj have lost their son. All right. But they do not want to lose the piece of land that provides for their family bread, Rafiq said.

No eviction drive

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and road accidents in the city.

The meeting, however, decided to be strict in implementing other decisions taken by the RSAC, which include mandatory provision for motor drivers and front seat passengers to fasten seat belt, helmet for motorbike riders and prohibiting talking on mobile phone at the time of driving.

The passers-by who don't use overpass or underpass while crossing roads would also be taken under the purview of the law, the meeting decided.

Besides, the fitness of the transports, driving license and head and sidelights of the vehicle would be strictly monitored from now on.

Requesting the government for suspension of the decision to evict hawkers from footpath, the leaders said hawkers are not responsible for traffic congestion.

"Weak execution of law, illegal parking on the roads, reckless driving of city buses and flaws in policing system are mainly responsible for city's poor traffic mismanagement," they said.

They urged the government to take a long-term plan for construction of hawker markets at various point of the city and take measures for their rehabilitation.

Dhaka City Corporation,

which is in charge of development of city road infrastructure and traffic congestion, is not working properly to resolve the problems, Abul Hossain said.

State Minister for Home Shamsul Haque Tuku said the home ministry is mulling for removing illegal parking on city streets.

The government must look into the easy movement of the city people side by side arrangement of their employment, he added.

Lawmaker Hasanul Haque Inu said a long-term plan is necessary for making the city free from slum, rickshaw and hawkers. People will not oppose any decision if they are involved with the process of taking the plan, he said.

Lawmaker Rashed Khan Menon said hawkers are doing business in every cities and it is related with employment of low-income group people. He proposed for a taskforce to make a plan for the identification and rehabilitation of the hawkers.

Shipping Minister Shajahan Khan, State Minister for Labour and Employment Munnunjan Sufian attended the meeting.

Leaders of Hawkers' League and Chinmull Hawkers' League Habibur Rahman Akhand, M Ahsan Atiq, Harun-ar Rashid, Swapan Majumder were also present.

Green light

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communication ministry official.

Currently, 11,260 taxis are operating in the capital, of which 4,513 are AC and 6,747 are non-AC cabs. Of the new taxis to be imported, 4,740 will be AC and the rest 2,000 non-AC.

The new taxi companies have to be environmentally compliant and should possess their own premises for workshop, garage, depot and other facilities.

Besides, the companies will have to maintain own radio link and global positioning system (GPS) so that they can provide services through phone calls. The customers will have to count additional Tk 20 for telephonic service.

According to the revised policy, no company will be able to lease their vehicles to other companies or individuals and will require Bangladesh Road Transport Authority's (BRTA) permission for ownership handover.

The commercial banks will be able to finance for taxicab procurement, but in that case the taxis will not get registration for the financing banks alone.

The new policy says no 800cc vehicles would be allowed to operate and minimum 1,200cc vehicles will be

allowed to hit the streets.

Economic life of a taxi will be increased to 10 years from existing eight years. Reconditioned vehicles would be allowed as taxis, but they have to be less than three-year old, while the ceiling is up to five years for 2,000cc vehicles, the official says.

As per the policy, separate driving licence will be introduced for taxi drivers, who by no means can refuse short-trip services to passengers. Moreover, owners will be obliged to have radio communications between taxis and their very own refuelling facilities, he adds.

Cabs were introduced in the capital in 1999, but the aim collapsed within a few years. Currently, about 80 percent of the taxis are out of service.

The owners blame selection of wrong vehicles, unskilled drivers, carjacking and road condition as major reasons behind the dismal state of the industry.

According to BRTA, out of 10,857 registered taxis in Dhaka around 7,500 have been discarded over fitness issue.

SR Khan, president of Cab Association of Bangladesh, observes the new policy will improve the service and upgrade it to international standard.

Panic keeps kids

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The school is around 200 yards from an army camp, which was burnt by aggrieved villagers during the violence.

Synthiya, a class III student of the school, told this correspondent that her classmates are frightened to see the movement of huge number of policemen.

"Usually, our classroom becomes full with the presence of students, but we are only three today," she added.

Attendance at Jangir High School of Kayetpara union was no exception. Headmaster of the school Shakhawat Hossain said a large number of students remained absent following the violence in the area.

All children

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report stating that 145 children are in jails.

It observed that the judges concerned of the lower courts should have considered releasing them on bail or keeping them in safe homes or any other safe places. And the social welfare ministry should have taken measures to keep them in safe places.

The bench also asked the Supreme Court registrar to send the copy of this judgement to all the lower court judges, authorities of jails, safe homes and ministries concerned.

It said there are a few safe homes for girls while no such homes for boys in the country. Jails can under no circumstance be treated as a place of safety.

Advocate Manzill Nurshid and advocate Fahima Nasrin placed arguments before the court for releasing the children from jail.

India, Japan confirm trade pact, discuss nuclear deal

AFP, Tokyo

India and Japan's premiers yesterday said they had broadly agreed on a pact to step up trade between the population giant and the high-tech nation but needed time for a deal on civilian nuclear cooperation.

India's Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and his counterpart Naoto Kan also stressed the warm ties linking two of Asia's biggest democracies, at a time of high diplomatic tensions between Japan and communist-ruled China.

Kan said after talks with Singh, who was on a three-day Tokyo visit, that "through this meeting, we were able to confirm and be confident about progress in the strategic global partnership between Japan and India".

The two leaders declared the completion of talks on a free trade and investment pact, with a formal signing expected in coming months, under which tariffs on 94 percent of trade would be phased out within a decade.

The deal will help Japanese auto giants, such as Suzuki, who have opened plants in India by lifting tariffs on parts, while also easing access to the market in fast-growing Japan for Indian generic drugs.

"We signed a joint statement confirming the conclusion of negotiations on a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement between Japan and India," said Kan after a meeting with Singh.

Singh called the conclusion of talks launched in 2007 "a historic achievement" which would "open up new business opportunities".

They also agreed to cooperate in fields as diverse as stabilising Afghanistan, combating climate change, safeguarding biodiversity, and pushing UN reforms and global free trade efforts, a joint statement said.

Brutal murder

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Begum Moyna, 45, wife of Ismail Hossain who is a Dhaka City Corporation employee, and Ahad.

Another grandson Salman, the same age of Ahad, was admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital last night with injury to his head.

Assistant Superintendent of Police Faruk Hossain of Keraniganj Circle told The Daily Star that on information they had gone to the house of Ismail Hossain around 10:00pm and recovered the two bodies.

Locals had taken Salman to Mitford Hospital before police arrived. Law enforcers later sent the child to DMCH.

Faruk Hossain said they had recovered a blood stained kitchen-knife from the spot.

Neither police nor the family members of the deceased could ascertain the cause behind the killings.

Talking to reporters at his residence, Ismail Hossain said, "I went to my workplace around 7:00am. I found the room locked from outside as I returned home at about 3:30pm."

Ismail went on saying he had looked for them for about five hours. "Finding them nowhere, I peeped through the window around 8:30pm and saw the bodies."

He along with some of his relatives entered the house by breaking the door and informed the police, added Ismail.

Plot of BNP

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Alam Hanif at a press briefing at the party president's political office in Dhanmondi yesterday.

Hanif, also special assistant to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, said 3000-4000 people in T-shirts carrying sticks took to the streets after the gathering. It suggests that BNP leaders instigated the violence.

A judicial probe into the incident will be launched soon to find out the mastermind behind it, he said.

"Khaleda Zia has taken a confrontational stance against the army since she had been asked to vacate her cantonment house. They [BNP] are trying to put the army on a collision course with the government and the people by orchestrating such incident," said the AL leader.

"Some housing companies are purchasing land near the site of the army housing project. These companies could also have a hand in the incident," he claimed.

Rupganj males

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Panic was intense among the villagers as the area was rife with rumours of fresh deaths of wounded villagers being treated in different hospitals in the capital, possible imposition of section 144 in the area, and police raids.

Mizanur Rahman, a micro finance programme officer of Brac, said he visited 90 houses in Tamnoshuri, Namamoshuri, Pitolganj, and Bhoktobari under Rupganj union yesterday to collect loan repayment instalments, but could not collect anything as no male was present in the houses.

"Women of the houses informed me that the males had left on Sunday night," he said.

A number of villagers also said most of the males did not stay in their homes Sunday night.

They left their houses before sunset, and took shelters in relatives' homes in nearby unions. Some of them spent the night on boats in nearby swamps.

"How can we be sure enough that we will not be arrested, as cases have been filed against more than three thousand unidentified people," said Arifur Rahman, 35, of Moushuri village.

"Peace in the area and relief among the villagers will not be restored unless the government comes up with a solution to the existing crisis," he added.

Rina Begum, 60, of Horinanodir Par village under Kayetpara union said her four sons left home around 8:00pm on Sunday, and passed the whole night on a boat in a nearby swamp.

"I could not sleep the whole night, thinking what would happen to my sons," she added.

Motaleb Hossain, 60, of South Nobogram under Rupganj union, said, "Though I suffer from asthma, I left my house and stayed with my relatives across the river."

Mazeda, 50, a house-wife in Horinanodir Par village, said she and around 15 of her women neighbours spent two hours in a swamp next to their neighbour-

hood, submerged in chest-deep water from 10:00pm, when police were patrolling the area.

Numerous men said they do not know when they will be able to start staying at homes at night again.

Family members of two missing young men, Saidul Islam and Masudur Rahman, of Bariasoni village under Rupganj union, are still waiting to know about the fate of their loved ones. They claimed Rab personnel picked up the two after they had been shot.

Shahar Ali, father of Masud said, "I saw Rab men firing at my son and then taking him away with them, I just want my son back."

Masud's wife did not eat anything since her husband had gone missing. She had to be administered intravenous medical treatment yesterday as she became sick, while their nine-year old daughter Mrititika was running around the house holding her father's photograph to the chest, Sahar Ali added.

Some other villagers near Moushuri Army Camp however expressed resentments about initial media reports that said Rab and police had opened fire on the protesters on Saturday. They claimed army personnel opened fire on the protesters.

The Inter-services Public Relations, in a media statement on Saturday night, said an unruly group of people stormed into the Army Housing Scheme project office, ransacked it, attacked army members and tried to snatch away their arms. All of a sudden, some bullets went off incidentally and left one civilian injured.

"We identified four to five of the accused in the case filed by police in connection with the incident," the OC of Rupganj Police Station said. He however did not disclose the names.

SP Afzal said a general diary was filed with Rupganj police in connection with the death of wounded villager Mostafa Jamal Haider, and they are thinking about filing a case in connection with it, if nobody else files one.

7 months

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the investigation officer (IO) of the case four times.

Harun Ur Rashid, associate professor of philosophy at Sylhet Government Women's College, was beaten up and stabbed to death in front of his house in Goura Govinda Tila area on March 21. A gang of eight people led by Kawsar allegedly attacked Prof Harun as he reprimanded Munni over her relationship with Kawsar.

The law enforcers had arrested eight people in this connection, of whom seven were freed on bail, while prime suspect Kawsar has been a fugitive ever since the incident.

The arrestees were Kawsar's friends Russel Ahmed and Alimul Islam, college students Sujina Akhter Munni and Safia Khatun Lipi, and Lokman Mia, a hotel manager who sheltered the killers, Jamal Ahmed alias Kala Jamal, Dulal Ahmed and Ataul Gani Umon. Munni is in jail now.

Rezaul Karim, deputy commissioner of Sylhet Metropolitan Police, told The Daily Star that the motive of the killings is clear.

He said the case has been handed over to Criminal Investigation Department (CID) although Kotwali police and the Detective Branch were initially assigned for the investigation. Efforts are on to arrest the prime suspect, he added.

On March 28, The Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) arrested five people including Munni and Lipi. The girls gave description of the murder as they witnessed the incident from

Harun's house. They were there to receive private tuition.

Munni, Lipi, Russel, Alimul and Lokman Mia were placed on a three-day remand on March 30.

The judicial magistrate of Sylhet on April 1 recorded Munni's confessional statement under section 164.

In her statement, Munni narrated how her boyfriend Kawsar and his friends Russel and Alimul beat up and stabbed Harun Ur Rashid. According to Munni, Kawsar did it because the teacher rebuked him [Kawsar] for his relationship with her.

Meanwhile, disappointed with police's alleged bid to implicate innocent people in the case at the beginning of the investigation, Harun's widow Afroza Begum appealed to the inspector general of police (IGP) and the home minister for a proper enquiry and actions against the killers. College teachers countrywide also took to the streets demanding justice.

The case was then transferred to the Detective Branch of police, which too could not make any significant progress in the investigation. Afroza again approached the police headquarters, IGP and the home minister for "proper investigation". The case was then assigned to CID.

CID's Inspector Mohidul Islam Khan told The Daily Star yesterday that they are examining some technical matters of the case, which may take another month or two to submit the charge sheet.

Pilots

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challenging the decision.

They sought HC's directive on the national carrier to extend their retirement age to 65 in line with the retirement age of pilots in other countries.

The HC the same day stayed the Biman order for three months and issued a ruling upon the national carrier and the government to explain why they should not be directed to extend pilots' retirement age to 65 years.

The Biman authorities recently filed a petition with the SC against the HC stay order.

The Appellate Division yesterday asked the Biman authorities and the petitioners to take steps for getting the writ petition disposed of in the HC by November 4.

Attorney General Mahubey Alam and Additional Attorney General MK Rahman appeared for the government and Biman while advocate Abdul Baset Majumder stood for the writ petitioners.