

Bomb hurled on female student in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A female student was injured when unidentified criminals threw a hand-made bomb on her in the city's Sutrapur area last night.

The injured, Pinki Akhter, a first year student of Dhaka Mahanagar Mohila College, was admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital with wounds in her left leg.

She said criminals hurled the bomb on her around 7:00pm near her house at Narinda.

Contacted, Sutrapur police could not say anything about the motive behind the attack.

Strangely silent star system seen

BBC ONLINE

The graceful dance between three stars seen by the Kepler telescope has drawn the attention of astronomers because it is not accompanied by a song.

Most stars are known to generate great booming sounds in their interiors, and Kepler can spot the resulting change in the light that they emit.

However, astronomers reporting in Science say a red giant they have spotted is unexpectedly quiet.

HD181068A is orbited by two smaller, red dwarf stars that orbit each other.

The study of the sounds within stars is known as astroseismology, and a separate report in Science details the findings of more than 500 stars whose deep rumblings Kepler has measured.

Fine slapped

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and Palli Bidyut Samity not to sanction any loan or provide gas and electric connections to those companies, he said. More unauthorised housing companies will face the same fate in the near future, he warned.

On the other hand, the DoE team also visited two other sites at Boldi of Dakshin Surma upazila where hills were being cut and ordered for cases to be filed against those responsible.

Govt trying

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attacked BNP leaders and workers there.

He claimed at least 50 leaders and workers of the party and its student body Jatityatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) were injured in the "attack" and 30 men were arrested.

He demanded an investigation into the incident and punishment to the people involved.

The ruling Awami League pledged to establish democracy and protect human rights in its 2008 election manifesto, but after assuming power, it has engaged in killing, attacking and oppressing the opposition men to establish one-party rule in the country, he noted.

BNP's Joint Secretary General Amanullah Aman, who claimed himself a victim of Friday's incident, said the attack was made on orders of Awami League men.

He dismissed the police's claim that the incident was an internal conflict of JCD and the police went to the scene to control the situation.

The police made up the statement to save their job, he added.

ERSHAD'S DEMAND

Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad yesterday urged the government to give exemplary punishment to the people responsible for the share market debacle, reports UNB.

"There is no scope to spare the influentials who were involved in the share market crash," he said in a statement.

He termed "regretful" the statement of the finance minister that the names of the influentials will not be published.

If the names are not made public, people will get a negative perception of the government, he noted.

He suggested compensating small investors by closing the bank accounts of the influentials and confiscating their wealth earned illegally.

Milk magician

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"A patent has been filed. Soon it (the suture) will go on a human clinical trial and, if everything else goes smoothly, be available commercially within three years," says Azam, who heads biomaterials and nanotechnology research team at Lincoln Research Centre of AgResearch, New Zealand's premier seat of frontier research.

Dr Azam, who won the Bayer Innovator of the Year 2010 award for his invention of quick wound healer bio-based dressing (using wool protein), says since dairy protein is easily accessible, the end product will be relatively inexpensive.

He blends together biomaterial from dairy-milk protein and absorbable polymer made from a plant to develop fibre as a medical suture for stitching wounds. It is developed in a way to be biologically degradable and safely absorbed in the tissue so that the surgical seams need not be removed.

The dairy protein is from whey, a liquid by-product from the process of making cheese or casein. The polymer provides the mechanical strength to close a wound and the dairy protein the faster healing qualities and other functions.

"The milk protein provides the biological character and reduces inflammation of the area and coagulates the blood. It creates a thin layer called granulation tissue and then subsequently epithelialises to make a new skin tissue. Conventional sutures do not have such bioactive molecules to play the role for fast healing," explains Azam.

Azam says they are looking at the next step of developing dairy protein into soft skin tissue for skin grafts,

and is in talks with giant companies such as dairy cooperative Fonterra about opportunities.

"In the meantime, I have invented two bone grafts medical implant technologies for the regeneration of defective or lost bone via implantation surgical procedures. So, no longer we require any stainless steel or titanium metallic implant. More importantly the newly developed implants will be ultimately absorbed by bone tissue and subsequently generate a new bone onto it. There is no need to go to hospital to remove it, as required in case of other metallic alternatives," says the Bangladeshi researcher.

Four international patents were filed for the development of this bone graft implant technology, reveals Azam. He holds six patents related to nanotechnology and wound dressing biomaterials, and 12 others in his other research areas which include bone graft implants, dairy protein biomaterials, shrimp or crab shells biomaterials and palm oil based bio-resins.

He mentioned that the two bone graft implants are at clinical study stage now.

The 44-year-old biomaterials scientist aims at making many of today's synthetic medical accessories redundant in his lifetime by replacing those with bio-based regenerative medicines (fibres?).

The bio-based dressing that he invented by using wool protein is widely in use in New Zealand, and the product also got approval from the regulatory authorities in the USA, the EU and Australia.

Getting an offer for a position of scientist at AgResearch seven years back, Azam took the challenge to see if high-value

medical products could be made from wool protein, widely available in New Zealand.

And he led a team to develop new medical technologies, some still in their infancies, but some so advanced that it leads the world.

US researchers are working towards producing medical products from hair and nail protein, and in Australia wool materials are being used, but the research of Azam's team is more advanced with patents already protecting the work.

Azam says, "The bio-based dressings are highly effective for healing chronic wound within 2-3 weeks. More importantly, the dressings are fully absorbed by body tissue during the progression of healing and regenerating new skin tissue."

Azam, who had his schooling in Dinajpur and had his master's degree in chemistry from Jahangirnagar University, says he always keeps in mind the potential of his research pursuits in benefiting people back home in Bangladesh.

"I think there are lots of potential bio-based materials unutilised or not adequately utilised (shrimp shell, silk etc.) in Bangladesh," he says.

He intends to develop a type of medical technology or biopharma products (such as bio-based dressing, bone graft implant or other medical technology) by utilising local bio-based materials like shrimp shells, silk etc.

A Bangladeshi pharmaceutical company recently expressed interest in collaboration in this regard, and discussions are in progress, he said without giving details.

Poverty fight needs

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at The Daily Star office.

He said while microfinance is a key tool for poverty reduction in Bangladesh, it does not serve the need of the extreme poor and excludes the poorest.

According to Wood, poverty reduction initiatives face various sustainability challenges. One is the issue of securing the livelihoods of the poor people and another is political economy which, he said, is by and large hostile to the interest of the poor.

Shaheen Anam, executive director of Manusher Jonno Foundation, said poverty is the result of injustice and discrimination.

"Today's not-poor may become tomorrow's poor. And tomorrow's poor could go on to become future's extreme poor," she said.

She stressed the need for redistributing khas land to the poor.

"We need to build people's capacity to raise voices for their rights, better governance and social security," she added.

MM Akash, professor of the department of economics at Dhaka University, said universal education is important to alleviate poverty and give bargaining power to the poor.

He proposed organising the poor people through cooperatives to empower them.

Lawmaker Tarana Halim said empowerment of

women, who are half the population of Bangladesh, would contribute to poverty eradication.

Tarana Halim disagreed that poverty reduction is a political issue. She said the issue of poverty reduction should not be treated as a political issue. "Let's make it a national issue," she said, stressing the need for creating employment for the poor.

Sadeka Halim, professor of department of sociology at Dhaka University, said the poor are extremely powerless and distressed. "They are deprived of information and power," she said.

Sadeka, also commissioner to the Information Commission, said despite economic growth, many youths among the poor are without any form of employment.

The issue of corruption also needs to be addressed as it affects the poor, she said.

"Corruption is high not at the bottom of the society but at the upper hierarchy of the social ladder," she said.

Efforts to depoliticise the poverty-reduction issue is important but it is in fact still a political issue, she said.

"We need political will and an integrated approach to reduce poverty involving the government, NGOs and private sector," said Anowarul Haq, team leader of Transformation of the Ultra-poor project, CARE.

A supportive and decentralised local government is

also required to reduce poverty, he said.

Kishore Sing, extreme poverty adviser at Urban Partnership for Poverty Reduction (UPPR) Project of UNDP, emphasised the need for addressing urban poverty.

"There are too many programmes for the rural poor but not many for their urban counterparts, whose numbers are on the rise," he said.

While there are many government initiatives for poverty reduction and social safety nets, many of them tend to get discontinued with changes of governments, the speakers noted.

"We Bangladeshis are very good at starting things but not at sustaining them," said Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star.

This makes sustainable initiatives in poverty reduction a very important topic, he said.

Shiree CEO Colin Risner, BGMEA President M Shafiqul Islam, Rural Development and Cooperative Division (RDCD) Joint Secretary SM Abdullah, UNDP Urban Analyst Ashekur Rahman, Shiree Project Director Asadul Islam, Practical Action Country Director Veena Khaleque, WaterAid Bangladesh Country Representative Khairul Islam, Kazi Zahin Hasan of Kazi Farms and Shishir Shil of People's Empowerment Trust also spoke on the occasion.

30 top share holders

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Committee Chairman Khaled told The Daily Star on Friday that there should be specific guidelines for private placement and all irregularities should be probed after restructuring the SEC.

He said the SEC should be modelled on the Bangladesh Bank structure, and should have an inspection department and a separate wing to implement the department's recommendations.

The report said a grave situation has been prevailing in the market in terms of private placement.

In most cases, permission for placement had been given at a price even lower than the Initial Public Offering (IPO) price, it said.

"In the fiscal year 2009-10, eight companies released convertible preference shares. Of those,

69 percent shares on average went to placement squeezing the scope for participation of common people," the report said.

A placement business was done as a result of a squeeze on public shares in the IPO with a big portion of shares going to placement.

The committee recommended that placement should be stopped completely or restricted to 25 percent of the IPO.

The SEC resorted to unethical practices over issuance of right share or preference share. In the FY 2009-10, eight companies withdrew about Tk 1,200 crore from the market through preference share. The SEC's approval for the withdrawal was questionable, the probe body said.

The committee recommended restructuring the SEC and taking action

against the people responsible. It also suggested forming a round-the-clock joint inspection team with representatives of the SEC, the DSE, the CSE, Bangladesh Bank and the Detective Branch of Police.

It said two executive directors of the SEC and Bangladesh Bank should lead the team.

The central bank should scrutinise the source and destination of funds, and find out whether the money was laundered.

The SEC should examine whether unethical methods were adopted and the law was violated while making transactions, the report said.

Another committee member said the probe body with the help of the central bank and the DSE looked into some accounts and found instances of irregularities.

Speed breakers

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vehicles. But the increasing number of deaths and injuries on roads suggests that the number of speed breakers may well keep rising.

Roads and Highways Department (RHD) officials confirmed that it is illegal to build bumps on highways unless authorised traffic engineers are convinced about their importance. But they also expressed their helplessness in the face of pressure from locals and their elected representatives, who constantly demand the speed bumps.

RHD engineers and the chairman of the parliamentary standing committee on ministry of communications say the trend is a direct consequence of anarchy on roads, where reckless driving reigns.

Throughout the country, motorists, especially truck and bus drivers, nonchalantly defy all driving rules and speed limits, overtaking other vehicles at bazars, intersections, schools, and hospitals without the slightest regard for life and property.

Police patrolling the highways are mainly concerned about escorting VIPs through their jurisdiction. These law enforcers have little care for curbing reckless driving until accidents happen in their areas.

Every time there is an accident involving pedestrians or slow-moving vehicles on highways, locals blockade the road and demand

speed breakers.

At times, villagers rough up RHD officials for the latter's move to remove illegal bumps from highways.

Thousands of speed breakers -- illegal and authorised -- now dot the 20,735km of national highways. Those slow traffic, increase fuel consumption, and encourage setting up of roadside shops.

Amid chaos in the transport sector and increasing number of deaths and injuries on roads, 78,495km of classified rural roads are also getting speed breakers. According to an RHD web information, around every 1.9km of road network in the country, the density of population stands at 1,000. Human activities on roads are therefore inevitable.

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, chairman of the parliamentary standing committee on communications ministry, told The Daily Star recently that the practice of putting up unauthorised speed breakers on national highways must stop.

He said reckless driving is the main cause of such initiatives by the people living along highways.

"Bulk of the professional drivers migrated to other countries, leaving a vacuum in the sector which is being filled up by amateurs," Rahman, also a lawmaker from Satkhira-1 constituency, said.

"When I go to Satkhira from Dhaka, I have to cross

151 speed breakers, wasting a lot of time and energy," he said.

Rahman added that the process of issuing driver's license, and policing on highways must be upgraded to tackle the situation.

Arifin Rahman, RHD superintendent engineer of Dhaka Circle, said there is no provision for speed breakers on inter-district highways.

"Speed breakers are not a remedy. We need to discipline the sector with awareness raising campaigns, and enforcement of laws."

"This trend defies all rules of road communications, and it is a blatant outcome of callousness and chaos gripping our road transport system," Rahman added.

"Throughout the country there is a tendency to build shops and bazars by highways. For development of the country, we need to have proper highways with proper signs, and a special force to intercept law-breakers and hand out punishment," said the official.

The problem is aggravated by vehicle operators. Most drivers joining the booming road-transport sector come from rural backgrounds; literacy, even the ability to write their own name, is rare.

They learn to drive from unqualified driving instructors offering cheap lessons, and assuring them of licences. And those ill trained drivers soon start driving on roads.

6 killed, 11 wounded in Dutch mall shooting

AP, Alphen Aan Den Rijn

A gunman opened fire with an automatic weapon at a crowded shopping mall outside Amsterdam yesterday, leaving at least six people dead and wounding 11 others, Dutch officials said.

The attacker was among the dead after fatally shooting himself at the Ridderhof mall in Alphen Aan Den Rijn, Mayor Bas Eenhoorn said. The suburb is less than 15 miles (25 kilometers) southwest of Amsterdam.

Four of the wounded were in critical condition, five were in serious condition and at least two others were slightly wounded, Eenhoorn said.

A witness identified as Maart Verbeek told state broadcaster NOS the attacker had a machine gun and appeared to be shooting at random.

"There was a panic in the mall, a lot of people running," said Verbeek, a pet shop owner. "I see the attacker coming, walking, and I go inside the store ... and I see him going by with a big machine gun."

One-man

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Earlier on Friday night, Hazare had announced to wind up his protest programme saying, "The government has accepted all our demands. This is a victory for the entire nation."

The government accepted the demands of Hazare-led civil society stating a committee would be formed, with equal representation from both the sides, to draft a tough legislation against corruption. A gazette notification would also be issued in this regard.

Under the agreement reached after several rounds of hectic discussions, the drafting committee will consist of five federal ministers, including Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee as its chairman, and five representatives from the civil society. The co-chair will be picked from the members of the civil society.

Communications Minister Kapil Sibal, who will also be a member of the committee, told reporters that it would draft the new law in time to make sure the bill is ready to be tabled in the monsoon session of parliament in June-July.

Sibal thanked Hazare and termed it a victory for democracy. He denied the government succumbed to pressure.

Other members of the committee are Law Minister M Veerappa Moily, Home Minister P Chidambaram and Water Resources Minister Salman Khurshid, Supreme Court Judge Santosh Hegde, senior lawyer Shanti Bhushan and his son Prashant Bhushan and eminent right to information activist and Ramoji Magsaysay award winner Arvind Kejriwal.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh welcomed the agreement reached between his government and the civil society.

"I am happy that the government and representatives of civil society have reached an agreement in our mutual resolve to combat corruption... The fact that civil society and the government have joined hands to evolve a consensus to move this historic legislation augurs well for our democracy," he said in a statement.

The premier also hoped the process would move forward in a constructive mode.

Hazare's hunger strike came at a time when the government is hemmed by a series of scams relating to sale of 2G telecom spectrum licence, construction of a housing society in Mumbai and projects involving last year's Commonwealth Games.

The sale of telecom spectrum licence alone has caused a loss of about \$49 billion to the state exchequer, estimated India's comptroller and auditor general.

The hunger strike had triggered a groundswell of support from civil society groups and opposition parties.

Ever since Hazare started his agitation on Tuesday, reports of candle-light marches and other forms of programmes had been coming from across the country in support of his move.