

2 hurt in gun attack

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A housewife and her brother-in-law suffered bullet wounds as masked gunmen opened fire on them at their Gendaria house in the capital last night.

Police said a gang of criminals stormed the house on the first floor of a six-storey building in Gendaria at about 10:30pm.

The motive behind the attack remained unknown.

Injured Gauri Ghosh, 32, and her brother-in-law Sumon Ghosh, 30, were admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Sumon was hit by two bullets in his back and Gauri by one in her left leg.

Fakhrul

FROM PAGE 20

Jasas, cultural wing of BNP, organised the meeting on the occasion of International Mother Language Day.

Addressing the meeting, Fakhrul said, "Don't be arrogant. Still you [ruling party leaders] have time and try to understand people's expectations. Let the democracy move forward on its own path."

Asking people to be united against the government's failure, the BNP leader said ruling party leaders including the ministers are speaking in such a way that they are taking position wielding swords against the opposition's rally.

BNP led opposition will hold the March 12 rally in the capital, and supporters from across the country will join the programme to make it a success.

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia had declared the programme from a mammoth rally at Chittagong on January 9 aiming to mount pressure on the government to restore the caretaker government system.

At yesterday's meeting, Fakhrul alleged that division is being created in the country, though Sheikh Mujibur Rahman wanted to make the nation united. "Communalism and fanaticism must be given up, and none should be treated as a fundamentalist only for his beard and cap," he said.

Chashi Nazrul Islam, president of Jasas, presided over the meeting.

4 assistant

FROM PAGE 20

Mohammad Sabbir Alam -- resigned on personal grounds, said JU Registrar Abu Bakar Siddique.

However, the university administration appointed KM Akkas Ali of Institute of Information Technology, Mohammad Ibrahim Khaled of Anthropology, Biplab Kumar Halder of Philosophy and Hossain Mohammad Sayed of Geological Science as assistant proctors, he added.

But the agitating teachers said the vice-chancellor again appointed four teachers loyal to him and the situation will not be changed for the VC's undemocratic decision.

"The university administration failed to ensure congenial atmosphere as the newly appointed assistant proctors are also loyal to the VC," said Prof Nasim Akhter Hossain, spokesperson of the agitating teachers.

A group of teachers have been demonstrating at the university since the murder of Zubair Ahmed.

Zubair, a student of English department, succumbed to his injuries on January 9 after an attack by a group of Bangladesh Chhatra League activists.

Agony, anxiety

FROM PAGE 1

journalist couple Sagar Sarowar and Meherun Runi.

Almost everybody has expressed grave concern about the security of their lives. They say they have become extra cautious about locking all doors in their houses.

Talking to The Daily Star, they demanded a proper investigation into the incident, immediate arrest of the culprits and stern punishment to them to check such incidents in future.

Mrinal Kanti Das, deputy office secretary of the ruling Awami League, said in addition to ensuring stern punishment to the culprits, a social movement has to be waged to create an ethical surge to combat social degradation.

Prof Dr Muhammad Samad of the social welfare department of Dhaka University said the killings were a fearful experience for all. "We are in panic. Many people phoned me, came to my residence and expressed their concerns," he said.

Dr Mohammad Atiqur Rahman, associate professor of respiratory medicine at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University, said, "We are all concerned about our security. Criminals will commit such crimes again if stern punishment is not handed down to the culprits."

Mohammad Imran Miah, who practises in the High Court, said, "The incident is a result of social instability and degradation following a deterioration of law and order in the country."

The manager of a city branch of Jamuna Bank said the murder of a journalist couple in a well-secured apartment is a hint that social security has gone out of order. It seems there is no law and order in the country, added the banker, who preferred not to be named.

Rezaul Karim, diplomatic correspondent of The Daily Star, said, "My family has become panicky. When I returned home on Saturday night after work, my wife took at least two minutes to open the door after making sure that it was my voice she was hearing."

"When I went to bed, she made sure that all the doors of the flat, including those in the kitchen and balcony, were closed and the main entrance was locked. Normally those doors remain open and the entrance door remains unlocked," he added.

Aminul Islam Mirza, special correspondent of the state-run Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha (BSS), said he could not sleep on Saturday night. "In fact, all night long I kept checking whether the doors were locked properly," he said. Strict enforcement of the law is a must to stop a recurrence of such heinous crimes, he observed.

Mohammad Ashraf Hoque, a special correspondent of Maasranga Television, said his family has already asked him if it is possible for him to change his profession. "After the incident, I have to be extra careful to lock the doors of my house properly."

Ikhtiar Uddin, senior reporter of daily Bhorer Kagoj, said the security men of his building have been

Mosharraf

FROM PAGE 20

cause the loss to the government exchequer, the case statement said.

Earlier, Niko authorities confessed to a Canadian court that they were compelled to give the gift and bribe to sign the deal, it said.

The case was filed under the Penal Code and Corruption Prevention Act. The ACC, during the last caretaker government's rule, filed another graft case against former premier Khaleda Zia, Mosharraf and nine others on charges of corruption and abuse of power in awarding a gas exploration and extraction deal to Niko.

According to the case statement, the awarding of contract caused a loss of Tk 13,777 crore to the state exchequer during BNP led four-party alliance government from 2001 to 2006.

directed to make sure that no one enters the building without proper identification and permission from the persons concerned. "My family is really frightened. We have directed our domestic help not to allow even known people into the house in our absence."

Taohid Alam Mithun, senior reporter of Boishakhi Television, said his father now locks the entrance, which has never been locked earlier. "Even my father closes every door of our house and rechecks those at midnight and has asked me not to go here and there."

Some other professionals said they were continuously enquiring about their family members while in office. Parents and relatives living outside the capital, including some living abroad, have started enquiring about them and advised them to be more cautious, they added.

Megh reeling

FROM PAGE 1

At one stage of the conversation, Mahir Sarowar Megh, the only son of late journalist couple Sagar Sarowar and Meherun Runi, took the notebook of this correspondent and sketched a number of things, including a revolver and a food plate, on it.

"They [the killers] threatened to shoot me. They had a gun [guli]," he said, pointing at the revolver he had drawn.

Overcome by fear and trauma, the child says things both relevant and irrelevant to the incident.

"Obviously he is shell-shocked and we are not discussing anything in front of him," said Roman, one of Runi's brothers.

Megh has been refusing to eat since the incident, he added.

"They [the killers] hit papa's leg and he fell down. Blood was welling out," he said, shivering.

He slept in his parents' room on the fateful night, he said.

When asked if there were "one or three people" in their house that night, he said two.

Since after the killing, he has been staying at a relative's house (The Daily Star is not disclosing the location for reasons of security). A student of the nursery class, he is not going to school because of security related issues. Yesterday, a number of his teachers came to visit him.

The incident has left such a deep impact on the child that he talks about it without anyone's asking him any question.

Last night, Little Megh was taken to the graves of his parents at Azimpur Graveyard where he offered prayers.

Major shake-up

FROM PAGE 20

Swapam Kumar Roy for Rajshahi division while special acting official (joint secretary) of the Ministry of Public Administration M Rafiqul Islam was given the charge as additional divisional commissioner for Khulna.

Besides, 59 special acting officials (additional secretaries), 146 special acting officials (joint secretaries) and 84 others (deputy secretaries) of the Ministry of Public Administration have been attached to different ministries and divisions of the government.

According to the hand-out, some 25 deputy commissioners and district magistrates and five zonal settlement officers, who were promoted to the post of joint secretary, have been asked to serve in their respective previous duties.

On the other hand, 60 others additional deputy commissioners and additional district magistrates who got promotion recently as deputy secretaries have also been asked to serve in their respective previous posts.

In the same way, recently promoted joint secretary M Monir Hossain has been given the charge as director to the Local Government Department in Rajshahi.

Khaled

FROM PAGE 20

or any member thereof any person acting under the direction in respect of anything which in good faith done or intended to be done in pursuance of this act ----," the act says.

Abdus Selim Miah, law officer of Bangladesh Thai Aluminium Ltd, filed the case with the court on May 22 last year.

In the complaint, Selim said that as the stock-scram probe body on April 7 submitted its report to the finance minister, its chief told the media that as per their findings Bangladesh Thai Aluminium Ltd had siphoned off Tk 15 crore from the share market. That bleached the company's image and caused it a loss of Tk 100 crore, the plaintiff said.

Hearing the complaint, the court summoned Ibrahim Khaled to appear before it on July 20 to give his explanation.

In the law suit, seven others were also made pro-forma defendants.

The company on April 24 last year filed another case with the Second Assistant Judge's Court and sought its order for removing the part of the probe report, which read of the company's taking away Tk 15 crore from the capital market.

But Judge Aftabuzzaman of the court on August 4 dismissed the case on the same grounds.

3 Robbers

FROM PAGE 20

in the area. During the gunfight Mukul and two of his close aides died on the spot and he suffered bullet injuries, Enamul said.

Mihir Kumar De, forest officer of the Sundarbans, east zone, said he had heard the news but did not have detailed information on that.

Moniruzzaman Molla, officer-in-charge of Dacop Police Station in Khulna district, said he was informed of the gunfight and killings in the evening by the OC of Mongla Police Station.

As the incident happened deep into the forest, it was not possible to reach there at night time. A police team may visit the spot this morning, added Moniruzzaman.

BNP, diplomats

FROM PAGE 1

Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, according to the sources, reiterated before the diplomats its position that the next parliamentary elections in Bangladesh must be held under a non-party caretaker government.

The foreign diplomats, for their part, emphasised the need for the ruling party and the opposition to arrive at a political understanding through discussions, the sources added.

While talking to The Daily Star, BNP leader Sabihuddin Ahmed, who was present at the tea party, said, "We just had tea and it was part of a regular gathering. Sometimes they invite us and sometimes we invite them."

Asked which political issues were discussed in the meeting, Sabihuddin, a member of the BNP chairperson's advisory council, said the country's internal issues could not be discussed there.

"But we told them we, as well as the people, want to see the next elections under a non-party caretaker government. They [diplomats] also said they want free and fair elections in Bangladesh with the participation of all parties," he added.

Meeting sources said the BNP delegation drew the attention of the foreign envoys to the counter programme declared by the ruling party for March 12, the day on which the BNP plans its grand rally. The delegation informed the diplomats about the purpose behind the grand rally.

The delegation told them about the deaths in Chandpur and Laxmipur on January 29 centering around the mass procession programme of the party and the police bans on some political activities in cities recently, sources said.

Party leaders Osman Farruk, Reaz Rahman, Rashed Ahmed and Shafiq Rehman were also present at the meeting.

Ambassadors and high commissioners of the USA, UK, Denmark, Germany, France, Australia, Canada were present.



PARTIAL EXTORTION SCENARIO

Federation	Extortion per trip (Welfare Fund)	Yearly collection (Approx)	Number of vehicles
Shorok Paribahan Shromik	Tk 70 to Tk 130	Tk 51cr	Tk 2 lakh (approx)
Biplobi Sharok Paribahan Shromik	Tk 30 to Tk 60	Tk 43.1cr	Tk 40,000 (approx)
Tank Lorry Shromik	Tk 30 to Tk 60	Tk 17cr	Tk 16,000

- Bus: Over 5 lakh
- Workers' federation: 15
- Workers' organisations: 510
- Bus owners' association: 412
- Workers' union: 7490

Minister pulls for extortion

FROM PAGE 1

The controversial minister became the talk of the country last year when he suggested that professional drivers did not need education.

The transport leaders yesterday asked the sub-committee to form another committee led by none other than Shipping Minister Shajahan Khan to implement their recommendations.

They also wanted Jatiya Press Club Moshir Rahman Ranga, executive president of Bangladesh Sarak Paribahan Samity, and six others as members of the

committee.

The parliamentary sub-committee, chaired by M Israfil Alam, held the meeting with top leaders of transport labourers and owners at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban yesterday to devise ways of stopping raging extortion in the sector. The committee had its first meeting on October 13 last year.

After the first meeting, the sub-committee informed reporters that transport workers' leaders, especially a minister-led labour organisation, were running an extortion regime

and the minister's organisation was having the largest piece of the pie.

"It collects at least Tk 51 crore a year in the name of raising funds for workers' welfare," Israfil told reporters, quoting other transport leaders, following the October meeting.

The sub-committee chief had said at the time that its findings were only the tip of the iceberg and they were yet to get the full picture.

He had said rampant "toll collection" resulted in transport fare hikes by 40 to 200 percent. People end up

paying high fares and also increased prices for all commodities, he said.

According to the sub-committee, more than 23 lakh workers are employed in the transport industry, which has over 5 lakh buses. There are 7,490 workers' unions, 510 workers' organisations and 412 bus owners' associations.

At yesterday's meeting of the sub-committee, Shahjahan Khan, Enayet Ullah and others demanded fixing a minimum charge which labourers and owners would pay to run their respective bodies.

They said labourers and owners organisations operating light vehicles and auto rickshaws should be allowed to charge each vehicle Tk 20 a day to run their organisations.

Truck owners and labourers organisations should be allowed to collect Tk 20 a day from each member as organisation running cost, said the recommendation placed before the committee.

They also recommended that each bus and truck pay Tk 20 on ferries to meet the expenses of labourers working there.

At the goods loading and unloading points, every truck would have to pay Tk 10. Trucks would have to pay Tk 10 at the beginning and conclusion of every journey.

Leaders of labourers and bus-truck owners organisations recommended that every inter-district bus and truck pay Tk 20 each to labourers and owners unions.

The leaders want payment of Tk 20 for each vehicle requisitioned for the labourers' and owners' unions and to compensate vehicle owners as also meet the daily expenses of labourers.

Shahjahan Khan, labour leaders and Enayet Ullah-led transport owners' leaders yesterday also recommended the formation of a committee comprising all stakeholders to implement policies on running their organisations and different bus terminals.

The committee yesterday did not make any observation regarding the 17-point demand that was placed before it.

Viqarunnisa

FROM PAGE 20

knockouts and two more tie-breakers that involved absorbing battles between 28 students, who showed much required calm and resolve to make for some compelling viewing.

Like Nafisa, Safa and Tahsina admitted that they had never seen or heard of the Spelling Bee before. But they said that they were grateful for the platform and to be able to make a name for themselves through spelling.

There were also nine more winners from three more city schools on the day. They are from ESS: Maisha Alam Ador (Class 8), Towseef Hossain (Class 6), and Shahriar Saleque (Class 9); from University Laboratory School and College Nazrul Hossain (Class 8), Ummeh Habiba (Class 8), and Mayabi Dutta (Class 10); from Academia Sakib Aleem (Class 8), Nafisa Noor Islam (Class 8), and Mohammad Naem (Class 7).

At least 500 students from class 6-10 will be selected for the second round from Dhaka division and there is every chance for interested students from any schools to make it through to the second round by being one of the top scorers in the online Spelling Bee game. Interested students who have yet to make the cut can log onto www.champs21.com and play the Spelling Bee game as many times as they like.

Basanta

FROM PAGE 1

flowers to bloom, for melody to course through the valleys and mountains, for colours to create patterns of life across the sky. And all this celebration arising in and beyond our courtyards and stretching into what is clearly an endless swath of the pastoral, to a certain extent the virginal, is but a message we have waited a whole year for.

It is spring. It is Basanta, that moment in the cycle of time when life replenishes itself through the sheer joy of nature passing softly through a transition from foggy cold to hearth-warming and heart-energising splendour.

Something of a tender note is in the air. The blue in the heavens brings forth the message that the butterfly is ready to sing once more, that birds are yet again in a mood of the frolicsome and joyous. Gaiety underpins life -- in young people and old, in the silence of the woods, in the tranquillity

which defines homes in the rural recesses of this land of the beautiful and the bold. For Basanta comes pregnant with charm -- in the blushing cheeks of the young woman for whom an eager man, wrapped in poetry, waits in the leafy shade of an ancient tree. It comes weighed down with memories --- of the days that have passed into memory, of those who have passed on to life beyond the frontiers of the temporal, of the clouds which have slowly lost themselves in eternity.

Pahela Falgun is that. And much more. It celebrates those who see reason to celebrate its coming through a sprinkling of flowers along the way -- the better for poetry to sprout from ground made cold by the blasts of winter wind. Pahela Falgun is but a metaphor for reflection on the years which have gone by. The aged look back at life that is past, to look ahead to life that yet will be. The

young sing and dance as if the day will never end. Troubadours walk down the dusty paths through the villages because it is the seductive silence of Basanta that calls. The crickets prepare to resume their interrupted tryst with men who sing and with women who dance in ecstasy in the light of the moon.

On Pahela Falgun, grandeur substantiates our dreams. Those dreams shine through the passion poetry we weave for those we love, through the sparkle which lights up a thousand stars in the eyes of those we care for.

The blossoms of Basanta are a hint of the fruitfulness of nature. In Basanta are intimations of the monsoon to be. Basanta is that special dewdrop in time when men and women reignite the flames of high romance in their being. Taciturnity is all.

Journos give ultimatum

FROM PAGE 1

channel Maasranga, and his wife Runi, a senior reporter of ATN Bangla, were stabbed to death in their West Rajabazar residence in the capital on Saturday.

Hours after the killing, Shahara Khatun, the home minister, told reporters that she had instructed the law enforcement agencies to arrest the assailants within 48 hours.

"We want to have faith in your words. But if you fail to keep your promise, we'll take to the streets demanding your resignation," said Abdul Jalil Bhuyian, secretary general of Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ).

BFUJ President Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury said the government must ensure the security of journalists so they could work without fear.

But if the government fails to do so, the journalist community will be compelled to go for a tougher movement, he warned.

Incidents of the killing of journalists have been going on over the last decade, said Ruhul Amin Gazi, president of another faction of BFUJ.

"We want an end to these incidents, he said, "Journalists are united now. If you [home minister] fail to arrest the criminals within 24 hours, you'll be ousted."

Shawkat Mahmud, secretary general of this faction, said journalists were the most vulnerable people today. They are murdered at home, crushed under the wheels of vehicles while on the road and are beaten up by police while covering events.

According to the rights body Odhikar, 20 journalists were killed between 2001 and 2011 across the country. Of them, five lost their lives in 2004 during the BNP-Jamaat rule while four were killed in 2010 alone.

No journalist was killed during the 2007-2008 caretaker government rule, says

Odhikar.

Expressing resentment over the government's failure to complete the trials of the killers of journalists, journalist leaders have demanded that it form a special cell to investigate such killings and try the perpetrators of the crime.

They made the calls at a protest programme before the Jatiya Press Club yesterday morning when members of the shell-shocked community formed a human chain and brought out a procession protesting the gruesome killing of Sagar and Runi.

Wearing black badges, several hundred journalists stood still, holding banners that demanded immediate arrest and exemplary punishment of the assailants.

They demanded a guarantee of natural death, saying they were now overcome by fear.

Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists, Dhaka Union of Journalists (DUJ), Dhaka Reporters Unity (DRU), ATN Bangla Paribar, Jatiya Sangbadik Sangstha, TV Camera Journalists Association Bangladesh, News Presenters' Society of Bangladesh, News Broadcasters' Association of Bangladesh and Karmajibi Nari, a rights body, joined the human chain in front of the press club.

DUJ President Omar Faruque and its General Secretary Shaban Mahmud, Jatiya Press Club General Secretary Syed Abdal Ahmed, DRU President Sakhawet Hossain Badsha and General Secretary Sajjad Alam Khan Tapu, among others, spoke at the human chain.

Meanwhile, colleagues of the Sagar-Runi couple and journalists of other media formed a human chain near the Saarc Fountain at the city's Sonargaon intersection.

Journalists and rights activists formed human

chains and brought out silent processions elsewhere in the country, including Savar and Cox's Bazar, demanding punishment of the perpetrators.

ROAD REPAIR RHD engr removed for failure

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An executive engineer of the Roads and Highways Department (RHD) was released instantly from his duties yesterday for his failure to operate a weighbridge and have some roads in Comilla repaired.

Hafizur Rahman, the head of RHD in Comilla, was attached with Sarak Bhaban in Dhaka.

Communications Minister Obaidul Quader ordered his instant release after seeing that the weighbridge (machine to weigh vehicles), set up only three days ago at Padua of Comilla to check overloading, was not in operation yesterday morning.

Quader himself inaugurated the weighbridge on Thursday. While returning to Dhaka from his Noakhali residence around 8:30am, the minister found no operator at the weighbridge.

Asked about the reason, Hafizur, who was with the minister, could not give any satisfactory reply.

He also failed to repair the potholes on Dhaka-Chittagong highway at Daudkandi and on Homna-Gouripur road. Quader earlier asked him to get the repair done on an emergency basis.

The minister then rebuked him for his failure and asked RHD Chief Engineer Aminur Rahman Laskar, who was also accompanying the minister, to release Hafizur instantly from his duties.