

Keep faith in law men, arrest soon

Shahara on Sagar-Runi murder

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Home Minister Shahara Khatun yesterday urged all to have faith in the members of law enforcement agencies who she said would soon arrest the killers of journalist couple Sagar Sarwar and Meherun Rumi.

"It's my promise to you as the home minister," she told newsmen at a meeting at Dhaka Reporters Unity in the capital.

The minister claimed that the law enforcement agencies did not fail to probe any cases during the tenure of the present government.

"They'll not fail this time too. We'll get a result soon," she said without elaborating on the progress made in the investigation into the gruesome murder of the young couple in early February.

Besides this case, Shahara said the government had already asked the law enforcement agencies to investigate all the cases filed for killing and torturing journalists in the last two decades.

Sagar, news editor of private TV station Maasranga, and his wife Rumi, a senior reporter of another TV channel ATN Bangla, were killed in the small hours on February 11 at their rented apartment in the capital's West Rajabazar.

Detective Branch of police started probing the murders. But frustrated by its failure to identify the killer, the High Court on April 18 ordered shifting of the case to the Rapid Action Battalion. Still, there is no result of the investigation.

The case has recently been included as a sensational one under the home ministry's monitoring cell.

The discussion meeting on implementation of law was organised by National Young Generation.

Additional Inspector General of Police AKM Shahidul Haque, General Secretary of Dhaka University Teachers' Association Prof Wahiduzzaman Chan, General Secretary of Dhaka Union of Journalists Shaban Mahmud also spoke at the meet.

BNP slates

Speaking to journalists in London, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Friday said her government was working to ensure free, fair and neutral polls in future and the next general election will be held following other democratic countries as models.

Rejecting the prime minister's stance, Fakhru said the opposition parties will not participate in any election under a political government and such election will not be allowed to be held.

The government wants chaos in the country, complained Fakhru, but the BNP wants to see a peaceful handover of power and the next election held under a neutral administration.

He vowed to wage a tougher movement after the Eid-ul-Fitr to compel the government to restore the caretaker government system.

"You still have time. Please amend the constitution to ensure a free and fair election. Otherwise, you will have to face dire consequences. Agitation will get tougher day by day after the Eid," he warned the government.

He also censured the government for terming former communications minister Syed Abul Hossain "a patriot." "Such remarks [made by the premier] would only inspire the corrupt persons."

The Padma bridge loan agreement with the World Bank would not have been cancelled, had Abul resigned nine months ago, mentioned the BNP leader.

The World Bank in September last year had suspended its \$1.2 billion credit for the \$2.97 billion Padma bridge project making allegation of corruption.

The lead financier cancelled the funding last month.

UN calls

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The agency said most of those displaced are living in camps and more tents are being airlifted in to help them.

The latest violence in Rakhine state began in May when a Buddhist ethnic Rakhine woman was raped and murdered by three Muslims.

On 3 June, an unidentified mob killed 10 Muslims.

Pillay's office said that since then at least 78 people have been killed in ensuing violence but unofficial estimates are higher.

"We have been receiving a stream of reports from independent sources alleging discriminatory and arbitrary responses by security forces, and even their instigation of and involvement in clashes," Pillay, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, said. "Reports indicate that the initial swift response of the authorities to the communal violence may have turned into a crackdown targeting Muslims, in particular members of the Rohingya community."

She welcomed a government decision to allow a UN envoy access to Rakhine state next week, but said it was "no substitute for a fully-fledged independent investigation".

The UNHCR said that about 80,000 people had been displaced in and around the towns of Sittwe and Maungdaw.

Spokesman Andrej Mahecic said that many were too scared to return home while others were being prevented from earning a living.

"Some displaced Muslims tell UNHCR staff they would also like to go home to resume work, but fear for their safety," he said.

Myanmar Opposition Leader Aung San Suu Kyi recently called for laws to protect the rights of ethnic minority groups.

In her first statement in parliament, she said such laws were important for Myanmar to become a truly democratic nation of mutual respect.

Myanmar has undergone a series of political reforms initiated by the military-backed government.

But some parts of the country are still hit by conflict and unrest, most recently Rakhine state.

measures," he said.

Turkey, which has given refuge to defecting army officers who have formed the kernel of the FSA, warned it could "not remain an observer" as violence raged across its southern border.

"We must do what we can together in the United Nations Security Council, and also in the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation and the Arab League, to make sure that we can make some important progress in trying to avert this appalling situation," said Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Police recovered the bodies and rushed the injured to the upazila health complex where two of the gang members succumbed to their injuries, the OC said.

They took four of the thieves -- Hasan, 24, Faruk, 38, Rana, 28, and Milon, 25 -- to police station while two were undergoing treatment at the health complex.

Police seized the truck and recovered the transformers from the spot, the OC said.

In Kushtia, a mob beat to death an alleged cow thief and injured his accomplice.

Deceased Sukur Ali alias Babu, 45, was of Raipur village of Shahjadpur upazila in Sirajganj, reports our Kushtia correspondent.

Babu with his accomplice Rustom had allegedly stolen a cow of one Farid Mollah of Cheuria village some time before the sunrise, said police quoting locals as saying.

As they were fleeing around 6:00am, after waiting for a good scope, villagers surrounded the two and beat them up mercilessly, leaving Babu dead on the spot, said Abdur Razzak, officer-in-charge of Kumarkhali Police Station, adding that Rustom had been admitted to Kushtia General Hospital.

Shooting

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hopeful Bangladeshi contingent who had hoped that Ratna's two-month training course in England prior to the Olympics would have helped her achieve something substantial. She had been excelling at practice scoring an average of 398, but it seemed like the pressure of the Olympics got the better of her and she crumbled at the big stage.

Gold went to China's ace rifle shooter Yi Siling, making her the first gold medalist of London 2012. Sylvia Bogacka took silver and Yi's compatriot Yu Dan won bronze.

Mobs kill

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assistant sub-inspector (ASI) of Trishal Police Station, said the gang of 10 thieves had stolen two transformers from Kanhar and Bhatiapara areas of the upazila. On their way to Baliapara by a truck, they were intercepted by a team of patrol police as two more transformers had recently been stolen in the area and police were checking almost every truck plying the area to arrest the thieves.

Spotted, the gang had pelted the law enforcers with brick chips and kept speeding away with the truck. The patrol team then began to chase the truck, said the ASI.

Informed, police of the next check post barricaded the road. This time the law enforcers fired eight bullets in the air to warn the gang, said the ASI, adding that the move made the truck stop.

Meanwhile, hearing the gunshots locals had come out from all around, chased the fleeing thieves and managed to catch them, said Firoz Talukder, officer-in-charge (OC) of Trishal police, adding that the villagers beat the thieves up leaving two dead on the spot and the rest injured. The driver of the truck, however, managed to escape.

The areas covered in the survey are Mirpur-10, Farmgate, Bijoy Sarani, the road in front of the Prime Minister's Office, Mohakhali, Kuril Biswa Road, Biman Bandar Rail Station, Banani, Kanchpur Bridge, Gulistan, Sayedabad and Jatrabari.

Medical experts say noise pollution causes headache and irritation that in turn make people suffer from

depression and anxiety. Excessive sound also interferes with attention. Continuous exposure to sound pollution increases the pace of heartbeats and the risk of cardiac arrest.

Lelin Chowdhury, chairman of Health and Hope Hospital, says sound pollution in the long term reduces hearing ability and increases secretion of stress hormone, which leads to a rise in blood pressure.

In addition, it makes people intolerant, making them vulnerable to psychological disorders.

Children suffer the most from hearing losses due to noise pollution and their mental development gets hampered. Noise pollution can also cause miscarriages and premature births.

"There is no count of the affected people, but the number is rising day by day," said Lelin, a specialist in preventive medicine.

Work for Better Bangladesh (WBB) Trust, an environmental organisation, in a survey between March and April last year found the maximum sound level in the capital's silent zones to be 104 decibels.

According to the trust, the maximum sound level in front of Square Hospital at

Rising noise pollution

FROM PAGE 1

educational institutes and offices. The rules do not allow use of brick crushers within a 500-metre radius of a residential area. Taking prior permission is mandatory for using loudspeakers.

The law has provisions for punishing the first-time offender by a maximum of one month's jail or Tk 5,000 in fine or both. The punishment for a second-time rule breaker is six months in jail at most or Tk 10,000 in fine or both.

But thanks to a slack enforcement of the law, offenders are rarely brought to book.

According to the noise control guidelines, the permissible level in the silent zones (100 metres around hospitals, educational institutions, courts and offices) is 40 decibels at night and 50 decibels during daytime. It is 45 decibels at night and 55 decibels during the day in residential areas and 50 and 60 decibels respectively in mixed areas.

In commercial areas, the limit is 60 decibels at night and 70 decibels during the day and 70 and 75 for industrial areas.

The DoE survey -- done at 12 major points between 11:00am and 1:00pm -- found the maximum sound level at 90 decibels while the minimum was at 77 decibels.

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A traffic sergeant who was present at that time told The Daily Star that some seven to eight students got into a fight with the restaurant staff over iftar bill. They tried to evade paying the entire amount.

"At one stage of the altercation, two to three students got injured and left the scene with their college mates," the traffic man added wishing anonymity.

After half an hour, some 50 students attacked the restaurant. They hurled several cocktails. They also vandalised the restaurant, leaving some staff injured.

Saudi govt

FROM PAGE 20

Saudi diplomat.

Ali was killed in the capital's Gulshan four months ago.

According to a statement released by the Saudi embassy in Dhaka, Prince Saud said that KSA had full confidence in the ability of the concerned authorities of Bangladesh to track down the criminals.

The Saudi government hopes that the criminals will receive apt punishment, the minister said in the statement.

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He suggested that the government form a national inquiry commission to look into the donor-funded projects and find out if they really aid the country's development.

Economist MM Akash said the government could manage the required funds from part of the remittance and issuing sovereign bonds on the international market.

He said 60 percent (or \$1.8 billion) of the estimated cost of the bridge -- \$2.97 billion -- will have to be spent in foreign currency. The amount can be taken from the \$12 billion a year remittance from expatriate Bangladeshi workers, he added.

Kazi Mohammad Shish, former chief engineer of WASA, presided over the seminar, also addressed by AMM Shafiqullah, former vice-chancellor of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology, and Engineer Sheikh Md Shahidullah.

Meanwhile, Workers Party President Rashed Khan Menon at a roundtable in the city yesterday said, "The World Bank has bluffed people by cancelling its loan, and we should construct the bridge on our own to uphold our self-respect."

The roundtable titled "Padma bridge, World Bank and Bangladesh: Form a Massive Uprising", organised by his party was held its office.

Menon urged the government to disclose WB graft issues in parliament, and hold talks with all political parties to reach a consensus on building the bridge with local funds.

Criticising media reports on Abul Hossain's resignation as information and communication technology minister, Menon said it seemed to have sided with the WB.

Columnist Syed Abul Maksud said construction of Padma bridge is now a prestige issue for the nation and, the opposition should make constructive observations in this regard. He demanded a full and fair investigation into the corruption charges made by the WB.

Manzurul Ahsan Khan, president of the Communist Party of Bangladesh, also spoke at the roundtable.

AREAS	PERMISSIBLE SOUND LEVEL	
	SOUND LEVEL UNIT (DB)	
	DAY	NIGHT
Silent zones	50	40
Residential areas	55	45
Mixed areas	60	50
Commercial areas	70	60
Industrial areas	75	70

Panthapath was 104 decibels between 9:50am and 9:55am on April 21. It was 103 near New Model University College between 12:00noon and 12:05pm on the same day.

So far this year, the DoE has conducted about 60 drives against sound polluters and realised more than Tk 1 crore in fine, but could hardly bring about any change.

Improving the situation requires more drives but the department cannot do so owing to lack of manpower, says DoE (enforcement) Director Munir Chowdhury.

It is also the duty of the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority and the traffic police to check noise pollution by drivers, he adds.

In 2005, the WBB Trust conducted a survey among 1,000 Dhaka city students, only to find 60 to 70 percent of them had difficulties concentrating and suffered from headaches because of noise pollution.

Ninety percent of them said their studies were disrupted by a blaring of horns.

Seven years have passed since. The magnitude of the pollution must have increased manifold by now as both construction work and number of vehicles have increased, medical experts say.

NGO pockets

FROM PAGE 1

The Global Fund, which so far has provided \$82 million to ministries and NGOs in Bangladesh to tackle the deadly diseases, said the misappropriated amount might be even more. The report recommended recovering the loss from Padakhep.

The Global Fund, an international financing institution, has so far committed \$22.6 billion in 150 countries to support large-scale prevention, treatment and care programmes.

The report reads Padakhep made significant efforts to conceal the fund diversion by fraudulently maintaining manufactured records to justify the withdrawals that never actually happened.

The fabricated papers include false bank statements and cheques, accounting journals in fictitious programmes and activities and invoices for made-up purchases.

"Vendors who allegedly provided goods and services under the programme also confirmed in several instances that the bids, invoices, and cheques bearing their companies' names were not authentic and that the vendors never provided the goods or services and they never received the funds," explains the report, prepared after a year-long investigation by the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) of The Global Fund.

Exposure of some financial irregularities of Padakhep in two AIDS prevention projects financed by The Global Fund in mid-2009 led the donor into conducting the investigation.

Save the Children, a globally active NGO and also the principal recipient of The Global Fund money, had appointed Padakhep as the sub-recipient. It found irregularities while monitoring the project implementations.

Save the Children ended its contracts with Padakhep on November 24 last year.

Padakhep challenged the contract termination and is now in a legal battle with Save the Children. It even claimed \$14.23 million damages.

According to the report, Padakhep held its funds with NCC Bank between November 2004 and December 2009. Later, it moved its accounts to Dutch Bangla Bank.

The OIG investigation team found that Padakhep had concealed the genuine bank statements maintained at the NCC bank and instead created and produced its own versions of statements, which were in fact fictitious.

The NGO often reported

different account numbers on its forged bank statements than the NCC Bank actually used. Padakhep produced falsified bank statements and provided those to Save the Children in order to back the expenditures, the report says.

The report used scanned copies of the genuine and fake banks account numbers. It drew a comparison that proved bank statements provided by Padakhep and those of NCC Bank were not the same. The amounts and dates of fund withdrawals were also different in the genuine and fake bank statements.

The OIG team showed the versions of bank documents provided by Padakhep to senior NCC Bank officials who confirmed that the statements were not issued by the bank. However, the probe body did not find evidence of the practice in DBB Bank accounts.

To maintain consistency between the false bank statements and supporting documentation, Padakhep created, produced and utilised extensive and elaborate false documentation to support fabricated bank statements, and conceal the actual nature of its expenditures.

The accounting journals reflected the transactions in the forged statements.

The OIG in its report placed an accounting journal page and the corresponding genuine and fraudulent bank statements. A transaction of Tk 61,700 for a workshop described in the accounting journal appeared in both genuine and false statements, but a withdrawal of Tk 35,000 was only in the false bank statement.

The OIG team said the amount of Tk 35,000 had never actually been withdrawn.

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