

# DEATH OF NURUL ISLAM Govt to unearth truth behind house fire: Home minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government will unearth the truth behind the fire, which killed Ganotantri Party president Nurul Islam and his only son at their house in 2008, Home Minister Muhiuddin Khan Alamgir said yesterday.

"The incumbent government considers the killing of Nurul Islam and his son Tamohar Islam a sensational murder case, but it did not get the required pace to complete the investigation due to lack of evidence of some leads," he said.

The minister said the investigation team of Criminal Investigation Department (CID) had been working to uncover the real incident and urged Nurul's family members and others to assist the CID to complete the investigation properly.

MK Alamgir made the remarks at a discussion organised by Nurul's family on his fourth death anniversary in the capital's Liberation War Museum.

On December 3, 2008, a mysterious fire broke out at Nurul's apartment in Lalmatia and killed his son on the spot. Nurul succumbed to his injuries 36 hours later.

Khandker Ibrahim Khaled, chairman of Bangladesh Krishi Bank, said the CID was not working sincerely due to unknown reasons. While two lab tests already confirmed that the fire did not originate from an electric short circuit, the CID is still to reveal the truth, he added.

Nurul Islam's only daughter Moutushi Islam also spoke on the occasion.



Sewerage pipes, bricks and mud have been rendering a road in front of Dhaka South City Corporation's Tilpapara office in the capital's Khilgaon useless for a long time. Delay by the contractors tasked with the sewerage development work is causing sufferings to the area's inhabitants. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

# Regional HR mechanism for South Asia urgent

Workshop told

STAFF REPORTER

Saarc does not have a comprehensive programme to address human rights, so there is an urgent need to formulate a regional human rights mechanism for South Asia, said speakers at a two-day workshop yesterday.

They argued that civil society institutions and people's movements in the region can take the lead, in the absence of meaningful regional cooperation from states, in positing a regional framework for upholding human rights.

The workshop, "National Consultation on South Asian Human Rights Mechanism", was held at National Academy for Planning and Development in the capital.

Regional Initiative for South Asian Human Rights Mechanism, a network of organisations and individuals working to create an environment conducive to the framework's establishment, organised the workshop.

Chairing the workshop, Ain o Salish Kendra Executive Director Sultana Kamal said it was unfortunate that there was so little regional cooperation among the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc) countries on key issues.

However, different regions around the world have made tremendous progress in

working together to establish regional interests, justice, peace and human rights, she said.

Sultana Kamal pointed out that in Saarc, no decision could be reached if one country vetoes while a state cannot be challenged on an issue that it deemed "sensitive".

In addition, issues that are of bilateral nature, such as border killings, are also left out of Saarc discussions, stated speakers at the workshop.

"Human rights should be elevated to a supranational level, whereby human rights will take precedence over individual states," said National Human Rights Commission Chairman Dr Mizanur Rahman while addressing as the guest of honour.

He also argued that the intractable positions of certain Saarc states pose a serious constraint to meaningful regional discussions and actions.

"If civil society bodies and ordinary people can find commonalities and a common language, why can not the governments?" he asked.

Another guest of honour, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Foreign Secretary Md Shahidul Haque, said each state must decide how it would envision state sovereignty and how much freedom it would give to citizens.

# ELECTION COMMISSIONER'S RUDENESS CEC apologises to journos

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Rakibuddin Ahmad yesterday regretted an election commissioner's misbehaviour with journalists and assured that such incidents would not recur.

Following the assurance, journalists have withdrawn the programmes they launched in protest at Election Commissioner Mohammad Abdul Mobarak's misbehaviour with them.

"I also did not expect this. Election Commissioner Mobarak is sorry for the incident and I am apologising on behalf of the commission," the CEC said at a meeting with members of Reporters' Forum for Election and Democracy at his office in the capital.

Following electoral talks on Saturday, Mobarak behaved rudely with reporters in front of the chief election commissioner and other officials of the commission.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Tarikat Federation yesterday demanded deployment of armed forces during the upcoming election and cancellation of Jamaat-e-Islam's registration.

The placed their seven-point demand during the electoral talks with the commission. A 10-member representative led by its president Syed Nazibul Bashar Maizbhandari took part in the talks.

Bangladesh National Awami Party-NAP also participated in the dialogue yesterday where they said arrangements will have to be taken so that the opposition party also take part in the dialogue to make the talks meaningful.

# Israel stands by settlements

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Sweden, Denmark and Spain also summoned Israeli ambassadors in protest at the plan.

Downing Street played down reports that Britain might withdraw its ambassador from Israel, but refused to completely rule it out as an option.

"We are not proposing to do that," the spokesman said when asked about the suggestion that Britain was planning to take the extraordinary step of withdrawing its ambassador. He said: "We are not proposing to do anything further at this stage" - suggesting that a withdrawal had not been completely ruled out.

Asked to clarify, the spokesman said: "We are consulting with our international partners and discussing the situation with the Israeli government."

The recall of the British ambassador would be a dramatic and unprecedented rebuke to the Israeli government, whose isolation was sharply illustrated by the overwhelming backing for the state of Palestine in New York last week. Only eight countries out of 193 rallied to Israel's side in opposing the move.

Britain is furious at Israel's decision to take punitive measures in response, including the authorisation of the 3,000 new settler homes and the development of land east of Jerusalem known as E1 for construction.

A Foreign Office spokesman said yesterday: "We deplore the recent Israeli government decision to build 3,000 new housing units and unfreeze development in the E1 block. This threatens the viability of the two-state solution."

"We have called on the Israeli government to reverse this decision. The Israeli ambassador to London, Daniel Taub, has been formally summoned to the Foreign Office this morning by the minister for the Middle East, Alistair Burt. The minister set out the depth of the UK's concerns."

The development of E1 has been frozen for years under pressure from the US and EU. Western diplomats regard it as a "game-changer" as its development would close off East Jerusalem - the future capital of Palestine - from the West Bank.

Britain has demanded that Israel rescind the decision. The UN secretary general, Ban Ki-moon, said the settlement expansion plans "would represent an almost fatal blow to the remaining chances of securing a two-state solution".

The EU foreign affairs chief, Catherine Ashton, said such expansion "may represent a strategic step undermining the prospects of a contiguous and viable Palestine with Jerusalem as the shared capital of both it and Israel".

In France, the foreign minister, Laurent Fabius, said Israel's plans were a "new area of colonisation" and, if confirmed, would "sap the necessary confidence in a resumption of talks".

He summoned the Israeli ambassador to France, Yossi Gal, to express his unhappiness over the project.

French media reported that London and Paris were considering joint action that would send a "strong diplomatic signal".

The UK and other EU countries had warned Israel against taking punitive action in response to the UN vote. A statement issued by the British embassy in Tel Aviv said: "The foreign secretary has consistently made it very clear that the UK would not support a strong reaction to Thursday's UNGA resolution that undermined the prospects for negotiations and efforts to build a strong foundation for the peace process. The recent Israeli government decision to build 3,000 new housing units threatens the two-state solution and makes progress through negotiations harder to achieve. We have called on the Israeli government to reconsider."

# One killed in clash over land dispute

A CORRESPONDENT, Jamalpur

A man was killed and at least 30 people were injured in a clash between two rival groups over land dispute at Charnahadanga village in sadar upazila of Jamalpur yesterday.

The deceased was Abdul Karim Sheikh, 30, son of Joyal Sheikh of the village.

Police said when the accomplices of Abdus Samad Bhuiyan and Abdul Karim Sheikh equipped with sharp weapons rushed to the disputed land at noon, they clashed with each others, killing Abdul Karim instantly and injuring the 30 others.

Of the injured, nine were admitted to Jamalpur General Hospital.

Police detained nine people from both of the sides.

# DEMAND FOR RUET VC'S REMOVAL Mayor fails to break deadlock

RU CORRESPONDENT

The prevailing deadlock concerning removal of Rajshahi University of Engineering and Technology (Ruet) vice chancellor continued on the campus as Rajshahi city mayor's efforts yesterday to end the feud were ineffective.

All academic and administrative activities at the university were at a standstill as a section of teachers, students and university staff continued their protest programme under the banner "Progratisheel Chhatra-Shikkhak-Karmakarta-Karmachari Oikya Parishad" demanding removal of Ruet Vice Chancellor Sirajul Karim Chowdhury.

They have been staging different protest programmes demanding the VC's removal since November 16.

Rajshahi City Mayor AHM Khairuzzaman Liton yesterday held a meeting with parishad members where he requested them to stop their movement while he talks to government high-ups regarding their demand, said sources.

But representatives of the parishad refused the mayor's proposal and demanded immediate removal of the VC.

Meanwhile, the agitators yesterday declared Abul Bashar, the Ruet registrar, and Nazimuddin Ahmed, finance committee member and the acting comptroller, unwanted on the campus, said sources.

Harun-ar-Rashid, convenor of Ruet unit BCL and member secretary of the parishad, said the registrar and comptroller were declared unwanted as they did not give salaries of teachers and staff for the month of November.



Fire Service and Civil Defence personnel inspect a fire hose in a garment factory in Dewan Haat of Chittagong city yesterday against the backdrop of a devastating fire in a garment factory of Ashulia on November 24 which claimed 111 workers' lives.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS



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