

US gun lobby defiant

Calls for armed guards at school; draws strong criticism

AGENCIES
The National Rifle Association, one of the most powerful lobbying groups in the US, has called for armed security guards to be posted in every school in the country and insisted that the only solution to gun

violence in the wake of the Newtown massacre was more guns.

The Newtown massacre was more guns. The National Rifle Association, which supports a broad interpretation of US citizens' constitutional right to bear arms, had been under pressure to respond in the wake of last week's massacre in a Connecticut elementary school.

Even as the NRA leaders made their combative and determined appearance, another four people died in Pennsylvania in America's latest shooting spree, including the alleged shooter.

And a string of celebrities including Jeremy Renner, Gwyneth Paltrow and Beyonce launched a video to back a campaign to clamp down on gun sales following the Newtown school massacre.

But the pro-gun lobbyists ceded no ground to those calling for tougher gun laws. "The only thing that stops a bad guy with a gun is a good guy with a gun," declared NRA vice-president Wayne LaPierre, in his first public comments since the shooting at the Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut.

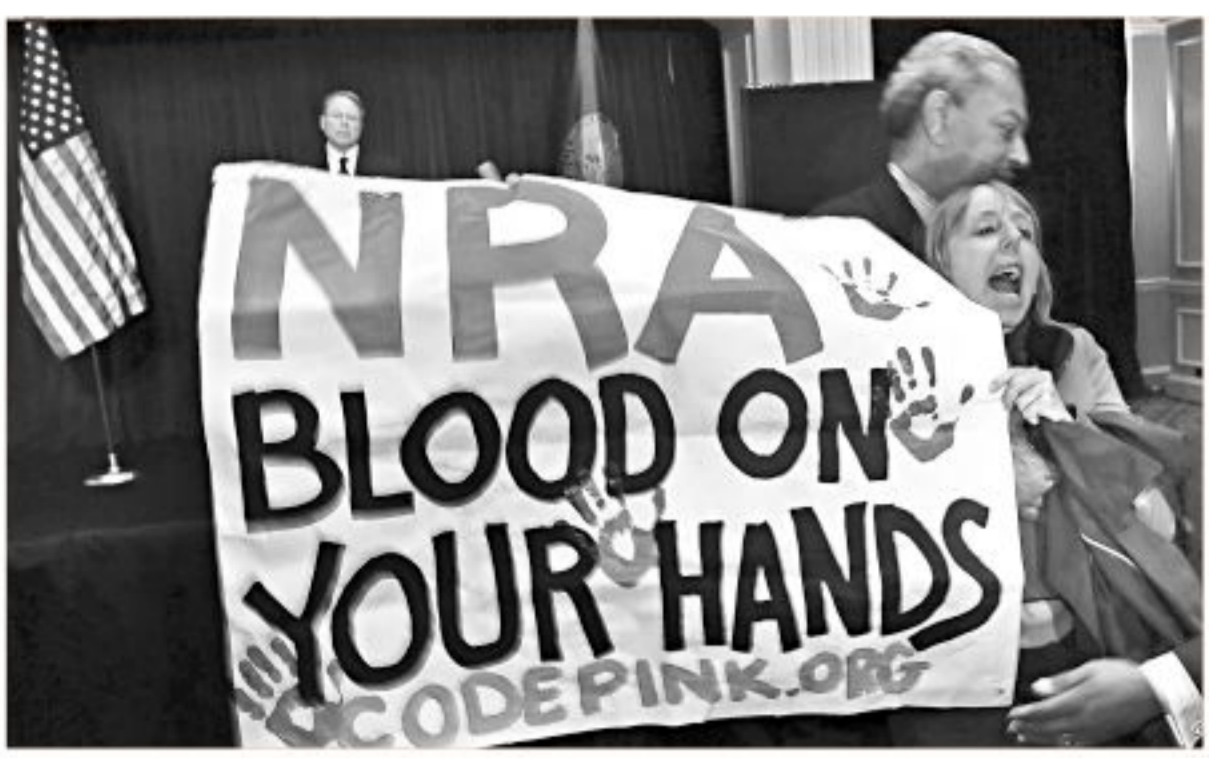
"I call on Congress today to act immediately to appropriate whatever is necessary to put armed police officers in every single school in this nation," he said, in a lengthy statement. He took no questions from reporters.

LaPierre said the NRA was ready to help train security teams for schools and work with teachers and parents to improve security measures, and accused the media and the political class of demonizing gun owners.

Last Friday, a troubled 20-year-old

man burst into the Sandy Hook school and gunned down 20 six- and seven-year-old children and six staff members trying to protect them, before taking his own life. He also fatally shot his mother.

America has suffered an epidemic of gun violence over the last three decades



A woman protests during NRA Vice President Wayne LaPierre's press conference in Washington, DC on Friday.

including 62 mass shooting incidents since 1982. The vast majority of weapons used have been semi-automatic weapons obtained legally by the killers.

There were an estimated 310 million non-military firearms in the United States in 2009, roughly one per citizen, and people in America are 20 times more likely to be killed by a gun than someone in another developed country.

Karzai blames foreigners for corruption

AFP, Kabul

President Hamid Karzai on Saturday blamed foreigners for most of the corruption in Afghanistan and said the withdrawal of Nato troops in 2014 would help rid the country of graft.

In a speech to mark International Anti-Corruption Day, Karzai said: "The corruption in our administration is small, the major corruption that involves hundreds of millions of dollars is not ours... it has been imposed on us."

"The big corruption is in transactions and contracts involving outsiders in Afghanistan... these contracts are given to senior government officials or their relatives," he said.

Karzai said that in 2014 when "foreign forces have left Afghanistan... their contracts, their administration will gradually disappear".

"This will help Afghanistan get rid of corruption, and it will be good for Afghanistan," he added.

BLASPHEMY CHARGES

Pak mob burns man alive

REUTERS, Hyderabad

A mob broke into a Pakistani police station and burnt a man accused of desecrating the Quran alive, police said yesterday, in the latest violence focusing attention on the country's blasphemy laws.

The man was a traveller and had spent Thursday night at the mosque, said Maulvi Memon, the imam in the southern village of Seeta in Sindh province. The charred remains of the Quran were found the next morning.

"He was alone in the mosque during the night," Memon said. "There was no

one else there to do this terrible thing."

Villagers beat the man then handed him over to police. A few hours later, a crowd of around 200 stormed the police station, dragged the man out and set him on fire, said Usman Ghani, the senior superintendent of police in Dadu district.

Ghani said around 30 people had been arrested for the murder and seven police detained for negligence.

At least 53 people have been killed in Pakistan since 1990 after being accused of blasphemy, according to the Center for Research and Security Studies, and accusations are becoming more frequent.

Ashraf to stay

FROM PAGE 20

presidium member of the party, has the potential to be its general secretary.

The AL high command is considering different aspects of the matter before reaching a decision on it. A section of the AL high command stands for Ashraf for what it says handling efficiently the general election held under the past caretaker government on December 29, 2008, through which the AL-led grand alliance came to power.

Sources close to the high command said party President and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina considers Ashraf competent enough in formulating party policies and dealing with issues both domestic and international.

Some other sources said Quader has wide contacts with the rank and file of the AL and enjoys considerable support among them for the second post in the party.

Contacted, the communications minister, however, dismissed any possibility of his becoming a

general secretary candidate at the party council.

Meanwhile, the prime minister's younger sister Sheikh Rehana and son Sajeb Wajed Joy might be included in the party central committee, sources said.

The last council of the AL held on July 24, 2009, re-elected Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina president of the party for the sixth consecutive time and elected LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Syed Ashrafur Islam its general secretary.

The AL council was set to have been held on July 24 this year but it was deferred due to the "political situation" at that time. On November 16, the AL Central Working Committee unanimously decided to hold the council on December 29.

The party leaders became uncertain about holding the council as scheduled when the opposition movement gained momentum with the BNP-led 18-party alliance's road blockade and hartal programmes recently.

But a couple of weeks

ago, Sheikh Hasina asserted that the council must be held this time. As directed by her, top AL leaders held a series of meetings to discuss completing all preparations for the national council. Councillors from across the country will join it and elect the new leadership.

The meetings formed a preparatory committee for the council headed by Hasina. And Ashraf sent letters to all the district and metropolitan unit presidents and general secretaries of the party asking them to take part in the council at Suhrawardi Udyan in the capital.

"We have sent another letter urging the grassroots leaders to send by December 25 the names of the councillors who will elect the new leadership of the party," said Mrinal Kanti Das, deputy office secretary of the party.

Mahbubul Alam Hanif, joint general secretary of the AL, told this correspondent they are now ready to hold the council despite various difficulties.

AL, allies vow to see end of war crimes trial

FROM PAGE 1

Suhrawardi Udyan, protesting what they said were BNP-Jamaat's conspiracies to foil the much-awaited trial. They also demanded that the trial of the identified war criminals be wrapped up immediately.

Rallies and processions were also held outside Dhaka yesterday. The 14-party leaders will hold a countrywide human chain on January 7 to press home the same issue.

Chairing the rally in the capital, senior AL leader Amir Hossain Amu said

BNP Chairperson and Leader of the Opposition Khaleda Zia was opposing the trial since she had shared state powers with war criminals in her cabinet from 2001 to 2006.

He claimed the war crimes trial was being held in a fair and transparent way, conforming to international standards and urged all to remain united until March 26 on the issue.

At the human chain on January 7, the alliance would announce its next programmes, Amu said.

AL stalwart Tofail Ahmed urged all to resist those who are against the trial.

The people of Bangladesh, including teachers, students and workers are all in favour of the trial except for Khaleda Zia, Minister without portfolio Suranjit Sengupta said.

Referring to Khaleda as "Jamaat's woman ameer," Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury said no one would be successful in obstructing the trial.

Workers' Party President Rashed Khan Menon said in this month of victory people should arrange victory rally but it was unfortunate that they had to take to the streets to demand completion of the war crimes trial.

Fourteen-party leaders Sharif Nurul Ambia, Mahbubul Alam Hanif and Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya Bir Bikram also spoke.

At another programme on Manik Mia Avenue, Home Minister Muhiuddin

Khan Alamgir said those attempting to foil the war crimes trial would be punished in accordance with the law.

No conspiracy would succeed, said Captain (ret'd) AB Tajul Islam, state minister for liberation war affairs.

ASM Firoz MP, treasury bench whip in parliament, also spoke at the victory rally organised by Jatiya Sanchalan Parishad, a platform of several non-government organisations.

A 50cr taka question?

FROM PAGE 1

cases, including those for murders and possession of illegal arms. Of the cases, five were filed with Tejgaon, four with Mirpur and one with Lalbagh police stations.

In 2009, he was released on bail in a case, but soon as the came out of the jail Gazipur police arrested him under Section 54 of the Criminal Procedure Code. The same year, his confinement was declared illegal by a court, but he chose to remain in jail fearing police shootout. Since then he had been looking for a safe exit from Bangladesh.

Sources in Kashimpur prison-2 said Bikash had

met an Awami League leader, now a minister, in the prison during the tenure of the last caretaker government. Both of them were kept in adjacent cells and they used to hold meetings. This helped Bikash establish a good relationship with the leader.

Bikash used the link after the leader had become a minister. Sources claimed he used to communicate with the minister over the phone quite regularly.

But the minister alone was not able to release Bikash and give him the safe passage. So Bikash had to established links with another influential Awami League leader, who

although not being a minister controls the police administration from the shadows, a source close to Bikash told The Daily Star.

"He [Bikash] decided to come out of jail and leave the country after getting the green signal from the leader," he said.

According to sources in police, intelligence agencies and Chhatra League, political reasons were behind Bikash's release. Quelling the opposition's anti-government movement is one of them.

The sources, however, believe that using Bikash for political benefits would be very difficult.

"Criminals like him are not loyal to anyone. They

serve to only money and like to enjoy backing of powerful corridors," said a source, who once used to be involved in underworld activities.

He said Bikash also had good links with several top leaders of BNP, including one who had been staying in the UK for several years.

"In future, if you see some high profile assassinations or disappearance of politicians like Ilias Ali and thereby a shift in opposition's movement you should consider that the Bikash factor is working behind those," he said.

An official of an intelligence agency who has been following Bikash case for long said Bikash had

already taken control of the entire underworld network that handles illegal firearms and ammunition, and extortion in Dhaka city.

"They are now raising money for Bikash and sending it to India," said the official, adding that a major overhaul had taken place in Dhaka's underworld before Bikash got released.

A source in the Kashimpur Prison-2 claimed that three to four months ago top criminals imprisoned had held a secret meeting inside the jail and unanimously selected Bikash as their boss. Notorious Sweden Aslam and Killer Abbas were also present in the meeting, he added.

He said Bikash had led a lavish life in jail. He used to keep a cell phone and a laptop.

A ruling party source said they had heard that Bikash's patrons had planned to release several other criminals from jail. But the idea had been shelved owing to media reports on fishy release of Bikash.

Jail sources said majority of the prison officials were against releasing Bikash on Friday, as it is against the norm to let a prisoner go on a holiday. But Bikash, who obtained bail late on Thursday, was released hurriedly around 8:30am on Friday upon the instructions from his influential patrons.

"As there was strong backing for Bikash, the jail authorities finally had to bow down to the pressure from the powerful quarter," a jail official told The Daily Star seeking anonymity.

grameenphone

Recharge 'Wholesale' and talk to more than 4 crore people countrywide

- Offer valid for all Grameenphone prepaid (Except Public Phone, BPO and My Zone offer beneficiaries) customers
- To avail the offer, type **Start On** in handset message option and send it to **9999** (No SMS charge applicable). Your registration will be confirmed in reply SMS. After confirmation, recharge at least Tk. 25 or more to enjoy 7 Paisa/10 Sec. call rate
- Recharge once to enjoy special tariff for 5 days (12 am-4 pm) to any GP number (Including F&F, Super F&F and Community tariff)
- For the remaining part of the day, subscribers will enjoy their respective package call rate
- One time registration is enough and within campaign period, recharge at least Tk. 25 or more as many times as you wish then the validity of the offer will be extended accordingly from the day of recharge
- To know 7 Paisa/10 Sec. offer validity, dial *566*19#
- After 5 day's validity if any subscriber does not recharge for the second time, he/she will return to the respective price plan
- If subscriber avails this offer, he/she will not be entitled to avail any other recharge offer
- To stop availing this offer, type **Stop On** in your handset message option and send it to 9999 (No SMS charge applicable)
- This offer can be availed for unlimited times throughout the campaign period
- 15% VAT applicable on all charges
- For details, please visit www.grameenphone.com

Bangladesh Parliament Secretariat

Strengthening Parliamentary Oversight (SPO) Project

Invitation for Tenders

1	Ministry/Division	Bangladesh Parliament Secretariat.
2	Agency	Bangladesh Parliament Secretariat.
3	Procuring entity name	Project Director, Strengthening Parliamentary Oversight (SPO) Project, Bangladesh Parliament Secretariat.
4	Procuring entity code	Not used at present.
5	Procuring entity district	Dhaka.
6	Invitation for	Tender.
7	Invitation Ref No.	11.320.014.00.00.077.2012-300
8	Date	December 17, 2012.
KEY INFORMATION		
9	Procurement method	Open Tender Method (NCB).
FUNDING INFORMATION		
10	Budget and source of funds	Development Budget PA: Grants
11	Development partners (if applicable)	IDA Administered Multi-donor Trust Fund.
PARTICULAR INFORMATION		
12	Project/programme code (if applicable)	TF 097134-BD.
13	Project/programme name (if applicable)	Strengthening Parliamentary Oversight Project.
14	Tender package No.	G-19
15	Tender package name	Procurement of Necessary Items.
16	Tender publication date	22-12-2012
17	Tender last selling date	07-01-2013 during office hours (05-00pm).
	Date	Time
18	Tender closing date and time	08-01-2013 11-00
19	Tender opening date and time	08-01-2013 11-30
20	Name & address of the office(s)	Address
	-Selling tender document (principal)	Office of the Project Director, Strengthening Parliamentary Oversight Project, 2/7 (1 st Floor), Minister's Hostel, Parliament Bhaban, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka-1207.
	-Selling tender document (others)	-As above-
	-Receiving tender document	-As above-
	-Opening tender document	-As above-
INFORMATION FOR TENDERER		
21	Eligibility of tenderer	Genuine supplier & should have valid trade license, VAT registration, TIN certificate, Income Tax clearance certificate.
22	Brief description of goods	Procurement of stationeries including paper, files, folders, Toner/Cartridge for printer/copiers and other necessary items for PMCU, SPO Project.
23	Brief description of related services	N/A.
24	Price of tender document (Tk)	Tk. 300.00 (three hundred only) (cash) non-refundable.
	Lot No.	Location Tender security amount (Tk)
25	1	Bangladesh Parliament Secretariat 14,000.00
26	Name of official inviting tender	A S M Mahbubul Alam.
27	Designation of official inviting tender	Project Director (Joint Secretary).
28	Address of official inviting tender	Office of the Project Director, Strengthening Parliamentary Oversight Project, 2/7 (1 st Floor), Minister's Hostel, Parliament Bhaban, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka-1207.
29	Contact details of official inviting tender	Tel: 9129039 Fax: 9143504 Email: pdspo.bdparliament@gmail.com
30	The procuring entity reserves the right to reject all tenders or annul the tender proceedings.	
GD-4989		
Project Director		