



Saidul Islam Rubel

Muggers kill Ctg student

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A student of Chittagong Polytechnic Institute was stabbed to death allegedly by muggers in Mehedibagh area of the port city early yesterday.

Following a wave of protest triggered by the killing, the Chittagong Metropolitan Police suspended assistant sub-inspector Tarikul Islam, team leader of a patrol team deployed in the murder area, for his "professional negligence", said CMP Assistant Commissioner Abdul Mannan.

Deceased Saidul Islam, 25, a student of electrical engineering department and lead guitarist of a local band, was returning home after performing at a programme around 2:30am, said AKM Mohiuddin, officer-in-charge (OC) of Kotwal Police Station.

Around 8:00am, police found Saidur's body on the road in front of an apartment building near his house, the OC said, adding that the body bore several stab wounds.

In protest at the killing, Saidul's neighbours, friends and relatives blocked the thoroughfare at Golpohar intersection around 3.30pm. They demanded immediate arrest and capital punishment of the murderers.

The protesters withdrew the blockade around 4.00pm, when CMP officials assured them of the arrests and beefing up vigilance.

Police detained one of the security guards of the apartment building for interrogation.

Female lawyer

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The killing happened around 10:00am when Sattar and his physician daughter Rezwana Akhter Mahboob were outside their flat on the second floor of a six-storey building at Mirpur section-6.

Two security guards of the building - Russell and Saiful - went into hiding immediately after the incident, said Abu Sayeed, secretary of the building's apartment owners' association.

Rezwana told The Daily Star she was informed about the killing by Sayeed over the phone. She was at her uncle's at that time.

Rezwana's wedding is supposed to be held on January 25.

"I found my mother's phone at the front door of our flat, and my mother's body was on the floor of the master bedroom. Her hands were tied up and the throat was twisted around with a piece of a cloth to choke," she said.

The household goods were found strewn all over the room, she added.

Sattar, husband of the deceased, told this correspondent they had not had any domestic help for the last two months.

"I left home at 8:30 am to cast my vote at the Dhaka University Teachers Association (DUTA) elections," he said.

"I talked to my wife over the phone around 10:00am and told her that I would return home in the afternoon."

"Around 10:45 am, I rang her up again but got no response," Sattar said.

"It would not be right for the present election commission to bring amendment to the RPO unilaterally," Huda told his audience.

"I don't know why the present EC has moved to delimit the boundaries of parliamentary constituencies," he added.

He also criticised the incumbent EC for not publishing the content of a dialogue between the immediate past EC and different political parties on election commission's reforms.

"Almost one year has passed but they [the present EC] did not publish the content of the dialogue yet. This is a disgrace," he said.

Bangladesh eyes

FROM PAGE 1

Bangladesh now claims 4.8 percent of the global RMG trade of \$412 billion.

According to McKinsey & Company, an international management consulting firm, Bangladesh's apparel exports will reach \$36 billion by 2020.

Some key market players believe that the country's potentials are even greater.

But all these prospects appear to have been shaken by one fire tragedy in late November at Tazreen Fashions Ltd, where 112 workers were killed. This single incident exposed inadequate fire safety and poor working conditions that still exist in many factories.

The incident was widely covered worldwide mainly because of Bangladesh's position as the number two apparel exporter. The buyers are now pressing factory owners to improve working conditions, hike wages of workers, and ensure labour rights and other compliance issues.

Following the event, many international non-governmental organisations campaigned for restricting purchase of Bangladeshi garments until the garment makers here ensure workers' safety and labour rights.

The apparel sector may face some hurdles this year unless the issues of proper working environment, better wages and labour rights are resolved.

Exporters here still remain hostage to large-scale buyers, who always try to pay the lowest possible rate for apparel items. The garment makers need to persuade these buyers to pay more so that they can address the compliance issues at home.

In order to retain its position, Bangladesh has to ensure adequate supply of gas and power, make available industrial lands, combat corruption, improve infrastructure and port efficiency, ease traffic congestion and develop skilled manpower.

Several factors such as availability of cheap labour, quota facility, cash incentives against export and entrepreneurial skills have helped the RMG sector grow since the country's entry into the global market.

Bangladesh managed to supply garment items to international buyers at competitive prices without having two important basic requirements - cotton and machinery.

Now, Bangladesh is not only a supplier of basic garment, but also a major destination for high-end apparel items.

The strength of the country's apparel sector is well understood through its ability to supply high-end items to famous global brands such as Hugo Boss, Adidas, Puma, Tommy Hilfing, G-Star, Diesel, Ralph Lauren, Calvin Klein, DKNY, Nike, Benetton and Mango. Currently, more than 30 percent of the total RMG export is high-end products.

The primary textile sector also saw a wave of investments for increasing demands for fabrics.

The sector with a total investment of over 4.5 billion pound is now capable of supplying 90 percent of fabrics for the knitwear sub-sector and 40 percent of fabrics for the woven sub-sector.

It took three decades of hard work for the country's garment sector to achieve its position today.

The journey started in 1978, with a shipment of 10,000 pieces of men's shirts worth 13 million Franc to a French company by Reaz Garments Ltd.

Desh Garment Ltd, the first fully export-oriented garment factory of the country, entered the global market the following year.

In 1980, South Korean Youngone Corporation formed the first joint-venture garment factory with a Bangladeshi firm, Trexim Ltd.

The number of garment factories in the country rose to 587 in 1984-85. With the arrival of many international buyers, the figure jumped to around 2,900 in 1999.

In 2005, Bangladesh with an increased number of production units became one of the 12 largest apparel exporters in the world.

Now, the country has more than 5,500 woven garment factories, 1,700 knitwear factories and 1,300 spinning, finishing and dyeing factories.

At present, the sector employs 3.5 million workers, 80 percent of whom are women.

The country's 60 percent RMG products enter the EU, 23 percent goes to the USA, 4.8 percent to Canada and 12.1 percent to other destinations worldwide.

According to data of Export Promotion Bureau, the RMG sector's contribution to the country's export was 3.9 percent in fiscal 1983-84, which now stands at nearly 80 percent.

The country's banking and financial institutions, and insurance and services sectors are largely dependent on the RMG sector.

Let Bangladesh grow

FROM PAGE 1

While the exact dates may spill over into the next year, for all practical purposes 2013 is our election year. This election will be our fifth since the fall of the autocratic regime of Gen HM Ershad. The previous four saw both the AL and the BNP being on either side of the fence twice each. During this period both parties and their leaders have been in power and in the opposition alternately. We have seen what they are capable of and what they are not. We have seen them keep their promises and break them both as the ruling party and the opposition. In other words, voters know them thoroughly and whatever they will have to say will be received with the

skepticism that they so well deserve. Therefore it will be interesting to see how these to parties present themselves to the people to gain support in the coming year.

As we start the New Year, we cannot but be apprehensive of the fact that the cursed hartals are back with a rising frequency and political violence is claiming more and more lives. We have seen neither any sign of diminishing of acrimonious rhetoric in politics nor any sign of lessening of intolerance.

On the contrary, corruption, mal-governance and partisanship have all registered a steep rise neutralising some of the significant gains that our economy has registered.

However, it is with the

strength generated by our economic successes that we wish to enter the New Year. Our confidence, necessarily tempered with the everyday reality, will hopefully help us overcome the enormous challenges that we are likely to face in the election year and take Bangladesh forward.

We therefore conclude with an appeal to both the parties and our two leaders - Let Bangladesh Grow. Do not hamper its growth in your 'couldn't care less for the consequences' rush for political power.

We wish all our readers, advertisers, patrons and all those involved with our industry, especially the hawkers a very Happy New Year.

-Editor

10,000 to get jobs in KL

FROM PAGE 1

interested job seekers from January 13. The registration will need to be done online at 4,500 information and service centres at the union parishad offices across the country.

Initially, a database of 35,000 jobseekers would be prepared. From this list 10,000 would be selected through a lottery for this phase of recruitment in Malaysia. The selected persons would have to face some tests, including for health, before they received confirmation through mobile SMS, said the minister.

He said the migration cost, which includes airfare, health tests, training and others, would not be more than Tk 40,000 per person. The selected persons would have to deposit the money to government-fixed places.

The online registration will begin with the Dhaka and Barisal divisions. Interested

candidates of these divisions will have to register between January 13 and 15. Their names will be selected through a lottery on January 16.

Candidates from the Rajshahi, Rangpur and Sylhet divisions will be able to register between January 14 and 16. Names of the selected candidates from these divisions will be announced on January 17.

For the Chittagong and Khulna divisions, the registration will be held between January 15 and 17. Their selection would be made on January 18.

Each job seeker would have to pay Tk 50 for the registration, said minister Mosharraf.

The selection of workers from each union will be done under a quota system based on the demographic map, but there is no restriction on

registration, said Begum Shamsun Nahar, director general of the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training.

Replying to a query about political influences in the registration or the selection process, Minister Mosharraf ruled out any such possibilities saying that a government official would monitor the registration and selection process at each registration centre.

On November 26 last year, Kuala Lumpur signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Dhaka on recruitment of Bangladeshi workers to Malaysia through state arrangements.

The Malaysian government had unofficially stopped hiring Bangladeshi workers from 2009 on allegations of corruption and irregularities in the recruitment process.

AL's costly success

FROM PAGE 1

production of gas-based power floated in the last two years will face uncertainty.

Because of implementation delays, a number of large power plants are now expected to come into operation in 2014, after the next general election. This poses a political 'risk' for the ruling AL like the one it faced in the past when in power in 1996-2001. The previous AL government had implemented enough projects to generate surplus power. But a good number of those came into operation after the BNP-led alliance came in power. BNP had claimed credit for this, and this may happen again.

Solving the power crisis through rental power plants, especially those using costly imported petroleum products like diesel or even heavy fuel oil (HFO), had its consequences. Because of increased import of fuel, the government was forced to subsidise the power sector by Tk 5,000 crore to Tk 6,000 crore a year. On top of this, it had to increase power tariff many folds.

The cost of power generation, which was around Tk 2.5 per kilowatt hour or a unit back in 2009, has now gone up close to Tk 6 due to power generation by rental plants.

As per a government projection, this cost will start falling from 2014 with the operation of several large gas-based and later coal-based power plants. Power generation cost from gas and coal is the lowest.

But as it stands today, some large power projects have either failed or missed their deadlines by years. The biggest such case is Bibiyana phase one 341 megawatt gas-fired power plant, contract for which was awarded to local company Summit, that could not take off due to several issues like lack of timely financing, delay in handover of land for it etc. Summit is now in the process of withdrawing from this project responding to a government request to pave the way for an alternative deal with any other company.

Another such scheme is for Bhola 225 MW gas-fired plant that had to be re-tendered twice as the selected bidders backtracked from signing the final contract. The govern-

ment recently signed two new deals for power plants in Bhola, now to generate 450 MW power, but these will come into operation in late 2014 if the contractors do not back out.

Similarly, a 450 MW project in Siddhirganj is being delayed by at least two years. This project was handled controversially from 2010 to award it to a particular company backed by a ruling party person.

In 2009, the government made a public commitment to build 1,000-MW Rooppur nuclear power plant with Russian help by 2016. But as of today, the project's financing has not been completed, although the government has made a lot of progress in preparing the complicated project. According to Secretary of the Economic Relations Division (ERD) Abul Kalam Azad, the nuclear power deal would be signed in 2013.

While a couple of large gas-based power plants would start partial power generation in 2013, adding at least 500 MW power, the country is also set to import from July 250 MW power from India for the first time. This would greatly ease the country's dependency on fuel-based rental power plants.

In the following year, at least five major power projects are scheduled to come into operation. If it is successful, this would help the government completely overcome dependency on rental power projects and enable it to reduce power tariff.

All coal-based power projects -- which could bring a long-term heavy duty and cost-effective solution to power crisis -- would come into operation after 2016 if they are successful.

The AL gave the highest emphasis on tackling the country's severe power crisis (1,200 to 2,000 MW load shedding) when it came to power. As an immediate solution, it opted for costly but short-term rental power plants which could be installed fast while it proceeded with large power projects.

By now, it has implemented dozens of projects to add more than 3,500 MW power, making load shedding almost gone for now.

Two state-owned Chinese ships entered into territorial waters around disputed islands in the East China Sea yesterday, Japan's coast-guard said.

One of the ships entered into waters surrounding the islands known as the Senkakus in Japan and Diaoyus in China at around 1:32pm, while the other followed about 20 minutes later, the coast-guard said.

The mid-level officials prevented workers from leaving the building after the fire had broken out, said the

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said on July 26, 2012, on the resignation of former communications minister Syed Abul Hossain.

"I'm an honest and dedicated man. I'm a proven honest man."

Syed Abul Hossain told The Daily Star on September 4, 2012, when asked to comment on the US diplomatic cable [revealed by WikiLeaks] sent by former American ambassador James F Moriarty branding Abul "less than honest".

"Me or the BNP will never allow the territory of Bangladesh to be used for any activities to harm India or do anything which is against India's security."

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia assured Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on October 29, 2012, during her India visit.

"In reality I'm now living in Gulag. Once upon a time in Russia, unwanted people were exiled to Gulag. I am also being sent to Gulag. I need your sympathy. Save my life."

prime minister's adviser Mashur Rahman told newsmen in front of his Minto Road house on September 18, 2012, when asked about the reports of his going on leave following the World Bank suggestion.

"Khaleda Zia is the female ameer [chief] of the Jamaat-e-Islami."

Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury said on December 22, 2012, at a mass rally organised by the Awami League-led 14-party alliance.

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Finance Minister AMA Muhiith told reporters at the finance ministry on December 23, 2012.

QUOTES OF THE YEAR 2012

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Free textbook

FROM PAGE 20

Festival Day by giving out books to students at Residential Model School and College in the capital around 11:00am.

The distribution will continue for seven days, say officials of the education ministry, which has been observing the festival on January 1 since 2011.

Primary and Mass Education Minister Afsarul Ameen will mark the day by handing out books at Kalachandpur Government Primary School in the capital's Gulshan.

The government decided on free distribution in 2009 against a backdrop of textbook crisis. It has been distributing books to both primary and secondary students at the very beginning of academic sessions since 2010.

Previously, only primary students were provided with free textbooks and the task used to be completed in the first quarter of an academic session.

This year, the number of textbooks distributed since 2010 will stand at 92 crore.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday formally

started the distribution programme by giving textbooks to students of different classes at Gono Bhawan in the capital.

According to the officials of National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB), all the copies have been delivered to schools in every upazila.

Of the textbooks, 10.78 crore copies are for 2.31 crore primary students and 11.47 crore for 8.55 crore secondary students. The rest are for students of ebtedai, dakhil, SSC vocational and dakhil vocational.

All the textbooks of primary and secondary grades will also be available on the government's e-books website (www.ebook.gov.bd) and that of the NCTB (www.nctb.gov.bd).

After 17 years, the government has this time made major modifications to 111 textbooks of class I-IX in line with the recommendations of national education policy of 2010.

Primary level textbooks have been printed in four colours through an international tender.

Tazreen fire

FROM PAGE 20

BGMEA President Shafiqul Islam Mohiuddin at his office in the capital.

"We want to know why they did it."

The facts of the inferno hinted at such "ill motive". The team appointed on November 26 spoke to a number of witnesses and injured workers and visited the multi-storey factory building many times before coming to the conclusion, Shafiqul said.

The whole incident should be properly investigated and the conspirators should be brought to justice, he said.

Tazreen Fashions had lacked safety for workers but the suspicious behaviour of level one's mid-level officials during the incident indicated that it was intentional, according to the team's findings.

The mid-level officials prevented workers from leaving the building after the fire had broken out, said the

BGMEA president.

The factory had no emergency exit and on top of that the ground floor was being used as a wear house which was full of inflammable cloths, yarns and garment accessories, says the report.

Therefore the fire quickly spread from the wear house to level one, two and three.

The factory organised fire drill a few days before the incident, Shafiqul said but did not explain why the association had not asked the factory owner to take proper safety measures for workers.

He demanded that the government establish an industrial park for the garment industry soon.

Earlier, a home ministry investigation also described the fire as an act of "sabotage" but did not name anyone involved.

The report published on Dec 17 recommended filing lawsuits against nine officials of the factory and its owner Delwar Hossain.

