

US journo, AFP contributor, kidnapped in Syria

AFP, Paris

A freelance American reporter who contributed videos to Agence France-Presse (AFP) in recent months was kidnapped in war-torn Syria six weeks ago and has been missing since, his family revealed yesterday.

US journalist James Foley, 39, an experienced war reporter who has covered other conflicts, was seized by armed men in the northern province of Idlib on November 22, according to witnesses.

Foley who last supplied AFP with video material the day before he disappeared, was picked up in the town of Taftanaz by four men who later released his driver and translator, the witnesses said.

No group has claimed responsibility for the abductions, in a country which has been racked by bitter civil war since the start of an uprising by rebels opposing President Bashar al-Assad's

regime nearly two years ago. Foley's family, which had earlier asked media groups not to report the abduction in the hope that a low profile would assist in efforts to free him, broke their silence Wednesday to reveal his plight.

"We want Jim to come safely home, or at least we need to speak with him to know he's okay," said John Foley, father of the missing reporter who also contributed to the US-based international news website GlobalPost and to major US TV channels.

"Jim is an objective journalist and we appeal for the release of Jim unharmed. To the people who have Jim, please contact us so we can work together toward his release."

The family has launched a website (www.freejamesfoley.org) and Facebook page (http://www.facebook.com/freejamesfoley) to highlight Foley's ordeal.

The website, which has several pictures of Foley while on reporting assignments in the Middle East, says he has been missing for 41 days. It also urges people to sign an appeal for his release.

Foley was previously kidnapped and held for six weeks by forces loyal to slain Libyan dictator Moamer Kadhafi while covering that civil war last year.

At the time, he was working for GlobalPost which was involved in his rescue and which is standing by his family in the latest incident.

The reason for the men's abduction in Syria remains unclear. It is not known if their abductors are financially motivated or if they are linked to any Islamist groups, rebels or pro-regime forces or sympathizers.

Large parts of northern Syria are controlled by anti-Assad rebel groups that form part of the Free Syrian Army or are made up of jihadists, including foreign fighters.

Army can build Padma bridge

Says Ashraf STAFF CORRESPONDENT

LGRD Minister Syed Ashraf Islam believes that Bangladesh Army has the capability of building the Padma bridge.

He expressed the optimism yesterday while addressing the opening ceremony of Hatirjheel-Begunbari combined development scheme at the project area in the capital.

"Honourable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina from here has directed the engineers of army to start drawing the design of the Padma bridge. You, the [project] team that has made the impossible possible, have the calibre to build the Padma bridge," private television NTV reported quoting Ashraf.

To save water bodies from grabbers, the shipping ministry in April last year set out installing boundary pillars along the Dhaka rivers, including the Dhaleswari; but ironically, those were set up excluding the foreshores in violation of a High Court order.

The move virtually paved the way for killing the four rivers by turning those into lean streams.

Abdul Mannan Khan, state minister for housing and public works, on several occasions had vowed in public to stop the destruction of rivers, canals and wetlands by some influential real estate developers.

Addressing a seminar on June 17, 2010, the state minister said the influential realtors have reduced nearly 21 square miles of wetlands and flood plains around the capital to 2.5 square miles.

But an inter-ministerial committee led by him this year legalised half a dozen private housing schemes developed illegally on wetlands, croplands and rural homesteads on the city's eastern fringe. The High Court in June last year had declared the schemes illegal.

Liveable Dhaka has remained a distant dream as the implementation of its Detailed Area Plan (DAP) was subjected to a "final" review by a committee headed by the local government minister in the face of strong opposition from the real estate developers. The committee

Lot of promises, very few steps

FROM PAGE 1 public money.

Though the national taskforce on river conservation decided to stop dumping industrial, medical and other wastes into rivers, releasing refuse into the Buriganga, Balu, Turag and Shitalakhyia continued unabated.

Some laudable enforcement drives by the environment department over the last two years revealed how reckless the polluters are. They penalised 930 polluters and realised Tk69 crore in fine.

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sat just once. The plan had been finalised by eminent technical experts in mid-2010.

Showing utter disregard for law, scores of illegal high-rises have been built by law-makers, politicians and businessmen in Gulshan, Banani, Uttara and elsewhere in the city with the government's silent approbation.

Talking to The Daily Star, Dr Hossain Zillur Rahman, chairman of Power and Participation Research Centre, said water crisis is going to be the biggest challenge for Dhaka in the next two decades.

The capital's groundwater level has depleted by 20 metres in the last decade due to harvesting of surface water.

In the UN City Development Index (CDI), Dhaka scored 48 out of 100 and ranked below Bangalore, Colombo and Lahore in terms of quality of life, with Stockholm topping the list scoring 97.

The much talked about metro rail scheme, believed to be the only mass transport mode to salvage the city commuters from perennial traffic jam, was delayed due to repeated alteration to its route as the government compromised with vested interests.

Children in the city live an isolated and confined life in want of playgrounds, open spaces, libraries and cultural and sports activities, said eminent social activist Prof Serajul Islam Choudhury.

According to the government's own findings, there are over 100 playgrounds and parks in the capital, most of which are either in a shabby state or occupied illegally.

Lack of open space severely hinders children's social and intellectual development and they are now growing as uprooted and alienated individuals, he added.

Famed urban researcher Prof Nazrul Islam said an integrated plan for transport, environment, land and eco-

nomics development is vital for Dhaka to improve liveability. An effective urban governance system should also be in place here.

Legal notice

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Uddin Khokon sent the notice to the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) on behalf of Tarique asking the premier to publicly express her "unqualified apology" for the statement within 28 days.

The notice mentioned that the premier at a public rally in Moulvibazar on December 1 last year said Tarique has property in London, and he was leading a luxurious life there with laundered money.

Tarique, elder son of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, has been living in London for treatment since September 2008.

Referring to BNP chief's claim that her two sons had been living an honest life, Hasina told the rally that the money, which was earlier siphoned off by Khaleda's younger son, was brought back to the country just two days after she had claimed so.

"Now, her [Khaleda's] elder son is leading a luxurious life in London. Could I ask about the source of his money? How could an honest man lead such a luxurious life abroad?" asked Hasina.

In the legal notice Mahbub Uddin Khokon said if Hasina does not withdraw the "defamatory statement" and seek apology, they will take legal action against her.

Tarique Rahman has neither committed any corruption nor laundered any money, the legal notice claimed. He (Tarique) has no property in London and is leading a very simple life there, it added.

Tarique was arrested on March 7, 2007 on charges of corruption during the military-backed government. He went to London after he was released on bail on September 3, 2008.

Afghan inmate kills wife during prison visit

AFP, Mazar-i-sharif

An Afghan prisoner murdered his wife during a conjugal visit, allegedly because she had been unfaithful after he was jailed for killing her relatives, police said yesterday.

Din Mohammad was sentenced to 20 years in prison two years ago for killing his mother-in-law, and his wife's brother and sister in the northern province of Samangan.

Mohammad's wife, whose name has not been disclosed, visited him in jail in the provincial capital Aybak on Monday and was found dead in a small private room used for inmates to see their wives, police said.

Mohammad confessed to her murder, Samangan police chief Ikram Nikzad told AFP.

"Mohammad was told by his mother that his wife had affairs," he said, citing a police investigation.

"When she came to visit him in jail he strangled her with her veil and killed her. They were meeting in a private prison room," he said.

Mohammad's mother has been detained for questioning, Nikzad added.

According to a UN report last month, Afghanistan has made progress in protecting women against violence, but many still suffer horrific abuse 11 years after a US-led invasion brought down the Taliban regime.

Afghan women still endure killings by relatives in the name of family honour, forced marriages and domestic abuses.

There are fears that legal protection and other gains made by women will be eroded after Nato and the United States withdraw most of their 100,000 troops by the end of 2014.

BSF kills 2 more

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not open fire unless it was for self defence.

Our Chapainawabganj correspondent reports: Mohammad Masud, 23, and Shahidul Islam, 28, of Shibganj upazila went to Malda district of West Bengal in India to buy cattle.

They along with others were returning with a herd around 3:00am when a BSF team opened fire on them near Bibhison of Gomostapur upazila, said Major Sharif Mahmud Hasan, deputy commanding officer of BGB 43 Battalion.

Masud and Shahidul died on the spot, some 150 yards inside the Indian border. The others escaped unhurt.

The BSF personnel took the bodies from the spot.

A company commander-level flag meeting was held around noon on Bibhison border where the BGB protested the killing and asked BSF to return the bodies, said Major Sharif.

BSF said they would hand over the bodies on completion of some formalities.

BD Sharma, additional director general (East) of BSF, claimed that the Indian border guards had opened fire to save their lives yesterday and also on Tuesday.

On Tuesday, BSF men had shot two Bangladeshi cattle traders dead near Bujruk border in Haripur upazila of Thakurgaon.

Sharma told the BBC Bangla service that some cattle smugglers cut through the fencing after entering some 150 yards into the Indian border on Tuesday.

He claimed that as the BSF jawans prevented them, they launched an attack and tried to drag a BSF soldier into Bangladesh territory. To save a life, BSF members fired on the cattle smugglers which left two Bangladeshis dead, he said.

About yesterday's incident, Sharma said there were no fence on that part of the border and smugglers intruded easily. The BSF men caught them with 26 cows.

At one stage, the smugglers attacked the BSF personnel and cut a BSF soldier's finger. The victim was later admitted to a hospital.

"In both of the incidents, BSF was compelled to fire in a bid to save their lives..." he claimed.

In Joypurhat yesterday, Md Habil Uddin, 22, and Monzu Mia, 40, were picked up by BSF jawans at the bordering area of Panchbibi upazila.

The two were working in their field close to the border around 4:00pm when a group of BSF personnel held them, claimed a BGB official of 3 Battalion, sources said.

However, the BSF told BGB that the duo entered Indian territory illegally.

Lt Col Md Khasru Sabir, commanding officer of the 3 Battalion, said they sent a protest letter to BSF and urged them to arrange a flag meeting.

Mannan slams

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speaking as the chief guest at the launch of the REHAB fair at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre in Dhaka.

Without having ownership of land, they are selling plots even 30 feet under water, Abdulsaid.

"Please do not cause sufferings to the customers just to make higher profits."

The state minister urged the Real Estate Housing Association of Bangladesh (Rehab) to take punitive actions against those dishonest realtors.

"You (realtors) are often termed as land grabbers due to wrongful activities by one or two developers."

Abdul, however, claimed that land grabbing came down significantly after the present government had taken some bold steps against such businessmen.

The realtors should win people's trust by making promises that they would fulfil, he said.

Punitive actions against the wrongdoers would also help to do business respectfully and regain customers' confidence, he added.

9.22cr voters

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parishads and cantonment boards for public inspection.

"People willing to have any corrections made to the particulars they provided during voter registration will have to apply for correction to the concerned officials by January 17," said a press release issued by the EC Secretariat.

The commission has offered those who are eligible to vote but could not register earlier a chance to register by that time by following the proper procedure.

The commission will publish the final voter list on January 31.

The EC prepared the draft list by updating the existing list through countrywide visits from March 10 to December 15 last year. Around 70 lakh new voters have been registered in the latest drive.

The number of voters in the December 29, 2008 parliamentary polls was 8.10 crore.

Fakhrul

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It also asked the government to explain in four weeks why Fakhrul should not be granted regular bail in the cases.

An HC bench of Justice Quamrul Islam Siddiqui and Justice Sheikh Md Zakir Hossain came up with the order and rule after hearing two bail petitions filed by Fakhrul's lawyer Mahbub Uddin Khokon.

Another defence counsel Moudud Ahmed told reporters that Fakhrul was implicated in two cases out of 38 filed in connection with the blockade.

So, there was now no legal bar to Fakhrul's release following the HC order, he said.

The cases had been filed with Paltan and Sher-e-Bangla Nagar police stations.

Attorney General Mahbubey Alam opposed the bail petitions before the HC bench.

Earlier on December 24, a Dhaka court rejected two bail petitions filed by the BNP leader in the cases.

The BNP-led 18-party alliance enforced the road-block on December 9, demanding restoration of the caretaker government system.

The following day law enforcers arrested Fakhrul in front of the party's Naya Paltan office in the capital. He is now in Kashimpur jail in Gazipur.

Fakhrul has been put behind bars twice during the tenure of the incumbent government.

On May 15 last year, he was sent to jail in an arson case filed in connection with the opposition's April 29 hartal. Later, he was freed on bail by the High Court.

Delhi lawyers

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no lawyer will stand up to defend the rape accused as it would be immoral to defend the case," Sanjay Kumar, a lawyer and a member of the Saket district bar council, told AFP.

Kumar said the 2,500 advocates registered at the court have decided to "stay away" to ensure "speedy justice", meaning the government would have to appoint lawyers for the defendants.

Another lawyer at the court confirmed the boycott to AFP.

Five men are expected to face charges including rape,

murder and kidnapping in the Saket court, with the prosecutor likely to seek the death sentence.

A sixth suspect is believed to be 17 years old, meaning he would be tried in a juveniles' court, but police are conducting bone tests to determine his age.

The brutality and horrific nature of the attack on a 23-year-old has led to protests in the capital and elsewhere over the widespread abuse of women and sex crime in India.

The rape victim died at the

weekend after 13-day struggle to survive injuries so grievous that part of her intestines had to be removed.

She was repeatedly raped and violated with an iron bar on a bus on December 16 before being thrown from the moving vehicle at the end of a 40-minute ordeal.

In 2008, lawyers also refused to defend a gunman who took part in attacks on Mumbai which killed 166 people, leaving him with a government-appointed lawyer. He was executed in November last year.

পাওয়ার গ্রীড কোম্পানী অব বাংলাদেশ লিঃ
POWER GRID COMPANY OF BANGLADESH LTD.
 (An Enterprise of Bangladesh Power Development Board)
 Institution of Engineers Bangladesh (IEB) Bhaban New Bhaban (4th floor) 8/A, Ramna, Dhaka-1000.
 Web: www.pgcb.org.bd
 No. 01/PGCB/Sec/2013/17 Date: January 01, 2013

NOTICE OF TIME EXTENSION FOR

PREQUALIFICATION OF BIDDERS FOR PROJECT SPONSOR TO DEVELOP ASHUGANJ-BHULTA 400 kV TRANSMISSION LINE AND 400/230 kV SUBSTATION AT BHULTA, BANGLADESH ON A BUILD, OWN, OPERATE AND TRANSFER BASIS, INVITATION FOR PREQUALIFICATION NO.: PGCB/2012/PP-01/PQ/Ashu-Bhul(TL&SS)

Ref: PGCB MEMO NO: 01/PGCB/SEC (DESIGN)/2012/5629, Date: October 22, 2012
 No. 01/PGCB/Sec/2012/6405, Date: December 02, 2012

The closing date for submission of Bids for the above works is hereby extended from January 06, 2013 at 11:00 am BST to **January 21, 2013 at 11:00 am BST.**

All other terms and conditions for the above Bidding Document shall remain unaltered.

Md. Ashraf Hossain
 Company Secretary

বাংলা একাডেমী
বাংলি জাতিসত্তা ও বুদ্ধিবৃত্তিক উৎসর্গের দৃষ্টিক

অমর একুশে

বাংলা একাডেমী
 ৩ কাজী নজরুল ইসলাম এভিনিউ, ঢাকা ১০০০

বিজ্ঞপ্তি

অমর একুশে গ্রন্থমেলা ২০১৩
 স্থান : বাংলা একাডেমী প্রাঙ্গণ

অমর একুশে গ্রন্থমেলা ২০১৩-এ অংশগ্রহণ করতে আগ্রহী প্রকৃত পুস্তক প্রকাশক ও প্রকাশনা প্রতিষ্ঠানকে সাম্প্রতিক প্রকাশিত গ্রন্থাদিসহ বাংলা একাডেমী কর্তৃক সরবরাহকৃত তথ্যফরম পূরণ করে একাডেমীতে জমা দেয়ার জন্য অনুরোধ জানানো যাচ্ছে। প্রাপ্ত তথ্যফরম গ্রন্থমেলা পরিচালনা কমিটি কর্তৃক যাচাই-বাহাইয়ের পর নির্বাচিত পুস্তক প্রকাশক ও প্রকাশনা প্রতিষ্ঠানকে স্টল বরাদ্দের আবেদনপত্র সরবরাহ করা হবে। কেবল প্রকৃত পুস্তক প্রকাশক ও প্রকাশনা প্রতিষ্ঠান বইয়ের স্টলের জন্য আবেদন করতে পারবে।

তথ্যফরম ৭ই জানুয়ারি সোমবার থেকে ১০ই জানুয়ারি ২০১৩ বৃহস্পতিবার পর্যন্ত বিপণন ও বিক্রয়নয়ন উপবিভাগ, বাংলা একাডেমী, ঢাকা ১০০০ থেকে অফিস সময়ে সংগ্রহ ও জমা দেয়া যাবে। স্টল বরাদ্দের নির্ধারিত আবেদনপত্র ১৫ই জানুয়ারি মঙ্গলবার থেকে ১৭ই জানুয়ারি ২০১৩ বৃহস্পতিবার পর্যন্ত (সকাল ১০:০০টা থেকে বিকেল ৫:০০টা) কোষাধ্যক্ষ, বাংলা একাডেমী, ঢাকা ১০০০-এর নিকট অফেরতযোগ্য ১,০০০.০০ (এক হাজার) টাকা নগদ জমা দিয়ে সংগ্রহ করা যাবে।

আবেদনপত্র ১৫ই জানুয়ারি থেকে ১৭ই জানুয়ারি ২০১৩ পর্যন্ত (সকাল ১০:০০টা থেকে বিকেল ৫:০০টা) বিপণন ও বিক্রয়নয়ন উপবিভাগে জমা নেয়া হবে।

অংশগ্রহণকারী প্রকাশক ও প্রকাশনা প্রতিষ্ঠানকে 'অমর একুশে গ্রন্থমেলা ২০১৩'-এর নীতিমালা ও নিয়মাবলি মেনে চলতে হবে।

শাহিদা খাতুন
 সদস্য-সচিব
 অমর একুশে গ্রন্থমেলা পরিচালনা কমিটি ২০১৩
 বাংলা একাডেমী, ঢাকা ১০০০