

Islamist gunmen kill 18 at Nigeria

Gunmen believed to be from Islamist extremist group Boko Haram have opened fire at a market in volatile northeastern Nigeria, killing 18 people, a local official said Tuesday.

"Some gunmen came into the market yesterday afternoon and opened fire on a group of hunters," local chief Abba Ahmed told journalists of the attack in Damboua.

"Eighteen people were killed in the attack."

There were conflicting reasons given for the attack. According to Ahmed, there were claims that the Islamists were angry over the hunters selling meat such as pork forbidden in Islam.

They are not

given," she said when asked if BCL activists were tarnishing the government's image.

Addressing a press conference at the Prime Minister's Office, the prime minister said she would like to see a fewer number of activists in Chhatra League rather than many "troublemakers".

Hasina, also the Awami League president, added that BCL and Juba League -- the pro-AL student wing and youth wing, were not so weak that troublemakers would have to be recruited.

The PM said she believed in the policy of "Dusho gorur cheye shunno goal bhalo," (Better none than a black sheep) and claimed her government gave clear instructions to the authorities to take action against troublemakers and criminals.

She also said her government would not spare anyone creating troubles in the society.

Already, more than 500 BCL activists have been arrested for their alleged involvement in unlawful activities, she added.

On elections, she said the next parliament polls would be held before January 25, 2014, in line with the constitutional provision.

Asked about the polls format, the prime minister said election would be held in a way it was done in other parliamentary system of democracies. But the opposition can still have their say in the House.

"There would always be some conspiracies, but it is people's support what is important," she said replying to a query on apprehensions about holding of the next election.

The polls would be held whatever conspiracies there may be, she added.

"They [the immediate past army-backed caretaker government] had a 10-year plan but could not implement the design due to people's resistance. The country got back democracy as I returned home [from abroad] despite all odds."

Over the last four years, 5,509 elections were held, including in municipalities, upazilas, city corporations and parliament constituencies. All these polls were free and fair and in many elections AL candidates suffered defeat, but the government did not interfere in it, Hasina said.

Turning to her 2008 polls pledges, she said, "We have achieved what we had committed."

She said she had pledged to bring all the upazila headquarters under internet service, but in reality, unions too have been brought under the service.

Citing another example of achieving more than the target, Hasina said her government generated 6,500MW of electricity against her polls pledge to generate 5,000MW.

Replying to a question about Prof Mohammad Yunus's intention to do politics as reported in a foreign magazine, the prime minister said it was a democratic country and everyone had the right to do politics.

"I have not restricted anyone to do politics.... May a hundred flowers bloom," she said with a smile.



The best three spellers out of thirty with their Golden Tickets in Willes Little Flower School, left, from Blue Bird School and College, four spellers were chosen to go on to the divisional rounds, centre, and the smiling qualifiers from Shahan International School, Rangpur, right.

Schools abuzz

FROM PAGE 20 The competition was intense with nervousness in the air. Ashraf, who didn't qualify said, "I could have won this," referring to the silly mistake that took his chance away.

The qualifiers from Viharunisa Noon School, Bashundhara were Nusrat Shahreen, Tamanna Mahzabin Moumita and Boishakhi Anam. The other six qualifiers from Dhaka were Abu Abdullah, Kazi Ibisham Fahim and Ayesha Tun Nashrah from Rajuk Uttara Model College and Farhan Zahid, Maisha Ahmed and Asid Haider from BIAM Model School.

In Sylhet, Abhijeet Acharjea Jeet, Nabila Zannat Rifa, Zareen Tasnim Nadi and Mahir Ibn Shafiq were selected from Blue Bird School and College. From Agrogami Girls' High School & College, Atiya Tahira Tasnim, Sanjida Yeasmin Shawrma and Bushra Al-Raqub secured spots.

Champs21 also visited three schools in Rangpur. Tonmoy Kumar Sarkar,

Ahmat Raiyan Suchcha and Md. Zubayer made it from Rangpur Zila School. Md Yeasteak Ahmed Saad, Touhida Islam and Ridwana Rahman Suhridi made it from Shahan International School while Sharmistha Sarkar, Meheka Mahmud Shagufta and Mir Ashraf Ali qualified from Biam Laboratory School.

Those who did not qualify from their schools still have a chance to participate as they can play the Spelling Bee Game by logging into www.champs21.com. Schools with the highest number of qualifiers from Online Rounds will be awarded.

The final of the Spelling Bee is scheduled to be held in June. Last year Champs21 visited around a hundred schools. They expect to visit more than three hundred this year to select qualifiers for the divisional rounds.

Detailed information about the competition is available on www.champs21.com, the first e-learning portal of Bangladesh.

Yunus

FROM PAGE 1 On the recruitment of the managing director of the microcredit bank, Muhith said a search committee had been formed but Prof Yunus had stopped it by filing a case.

Prof Yunus stepped down as the managing director of the bank in May 2011, after the central bank had decided to remove him.

GB Chairman Haque said Tk 30,000 crore of Grameen Telecom which the company had received as a dividend from Grameenphone, was traceless.

"The money was supposed to be with the Grameen Bank, as its members are the beneficiaries... But where is it? It is heard that Grameen Telecom had set up another company Grameen Telecom Trust," he said, adding that GB was investigating the matter.

The GB chairman also claimed that the bank was now in a better shape with 2,567 branches across the country and 26,000 employees.

"It has not been destabilised and none is uncomfortable here," he said.

Haque also said Prof Yunus had left the bank when it was going to turn 30. He had left an infrastructure and all we need to do is to retain it.

The GB chairman went to the finance ministry to discuss his plans to set up another microcredit bank.

Muhith welcomed the plan and told Haque that had he come with the proposal earlier they could have set up a microcredit bank.

2 murdered

FROM PAGE 20 upazila of Dhaka. Shaon was a grocer and Shamim an employee at a shop at Savar bus stand.

On Tuesday afternoon, locals in Bakchar area in Singair upazila of Manikganj saw six bikers on two motorcycles reaching the area. Minutes later, four of them drove off.

Locals later found the two bullet-hit bodies and informed police, who recovered the bodies from the spot.

Victims' relatives accused three of the deceased's friends -- Nazrul, Jishan, Raj -- of committing the crime.

Three months ago, members of Rapid Action Battalion arrested Nazrul, 30, of Mazidpur area in Savar with a firearm from the capital's Uttara, Shaon's brother Sajal told The Daily Star.

Following his arrest, Shaon and Shamim took his (Nazrul's) motorcycle and kept it in possession. A few days later, joint convener of Savar upazila unit Jubo League Selim Mandal took the bike from the duo.

Coming out of jail earlier this week, Nazrul demanded his bike back, which sparked the feud among them, mentioned Sajal.

A friend of the victims, Raj called the two on Tuesday noon. Joined by several others, Raj later took them (victims) to Dhaleswari riverside, from where the bodies were recovered.

Contacted, Jubo League leader Selim Mandal denied taking the motorcycle from Shaon and Shamim.

Autopsies were carried out on the bodies of the two at Manikganj Sadar Hospital yesterday afternoon.

Hospital sources said the two received four bullets each.

Law enforcers filed a murder case with Singair Police Station on Tuesday, accusing unknown assailants.

Evidence found

FROM PAGE 1 agency, told reporters at the agency's Bailey Road office yesterday, "We will submit the investigation report [on Mobarak Hossain] to the chief prosecutor tomorrow [Thursday]."

Abdul Hannan Khan said Khodeja Begum, whose father was allegedly killed by Mobarak Hossain alias Mobarak Ali, had filed a case with Brahmanbaria court in 2009 which was transferred to the International Crimes Tribunal in 2011.

The tribunal then asked the agency to investigate the matter.

Sanaul Huq, co-coordinator of the probe agency, said Mobarak, as a commander of Razakar Bahini, an auxiliary force of the Pakistani army during the war, was involved in five incidents of crimes against humanity and genocide.

They are: the incident of genocide at Tanmandail and Jangail of Akhaura that left 33 dead; abduction, torture and killing of Shaheed Ashu Ranjan Dev and Shaheed Abdul Khalek; abduction, torture of two people of Shyampur village; and the killing of one of the two; and the torture of one person of Kharampur in Brahmanbaria.

Sanaul said a total 21 people were made witnesses of the case.

Shyamal Chowdhury, the investigation officer of the case, said Mobarak had been the commander of two Razakar camps, Anandamoye Kalibari Camp and Suhilpur Union Parishad Camp, during the war.

He said Abdul Khalek, father of Khodeja Begum, was a pro-liberation Ansar member and he had been abducted when he was on his way to see his sick grandparents.

Khalek was tortured at Suhilpur Union Parishad Razakar Camp before Mobarak shot him dead at Bakalighat beside the Titus River.

He said Mobarak's name was on the list of Razakars kept at the deputy commissioner's office of Brahmanbaria.

About his political affiliation, Shyamal said, "He was a Rokan [member] of Jamaat-e-Islami unit of the union after the Liberation War. I don't know about his present political status."

Investigator Hannan said, also asked Jica, ADB and other co-financiers to follow suit as they are members of the consortium for financing the project."

She said the global lender was allowed to investigate the allegations whatever way they wanted.

In an oblique reference to a meeting between ex-communications minister Syed Abul Hossain and SNC Lavalin officials, Hasina questioned the logic behind the WB's allegations, and said it is illogical that the person who arranged the meeting is innocent but the one who held the meeting is guilty.

The prime minister said there was an understanding between the WB and the Anti-Corruption Commission that nothing related to the investigation would be disclosed.

She wondered how a particular daily newspaper published the questions the WB panel asked in a letter to the ACC even before the commission or the finance ministry or she got it.

"This was published in a particular process... please you make an inquiry to see if there is any ill motive or

"We have heard that he was involved in the politics of local Awami League. But political identity [of suspects] is not important to us."

Meanwhile, prosecutor Rana Dasgupta told The Daily Star that after getting the investigation report, statements of witnesses, related documents, and completing their scrutiny, they would prepare to place formal charges against Mobarak before the tribunal.

LOCAL LEADERS' SAY Mobarak, whom locals considered to be a Jamaat man, joined the Awami League in 1996, Nowab Miah, president of Mugra union Awami League, told The Daily Star yesterday over the phone.

Nowab said they knew Mobarak as a Jamaat man but in 1996 he delivered an anti-Jamaat speech and became a candidate for the organising secretary post of Mugra union Awami League.

"With the help of some influential local leaders, Mobarak got the post," said Nowab, who was elected general secretary of the unit in 1996.

"But when we learnt that a war crimes case was filed against Mobarak, we neither expelled him nor invited him to party meetings and programmes," said Nowab.

"In our last council [in 2012] of the unit committee, we dropped Mobarak from the committee and officially, he does not have any relation with our party," he said.

Nowab said Mobarak wanted a certificate from him that prove Mobarak used to be an organising secretary of Mugra union Awami League. "I declined to issue the certificate as he was accused of war crimes," Nowab added.

Syed Borhanuddin, president of Akhaura upazila Awami League unit and the upazila chairman, told The Daily Star, "I know him [Mobarak] as a social worker and a well-established person of Mugra."

"I do not know whether Mobarak was a Razakar or was involved in war crimes in 1971," he said, adding, "I have no knowledge of him being involved in Jamaat."

Borhan said he knows Mobarak as "a member of the Awami League family".

"He [Mobarak] is a victim of intra-village conflict and he was implicated in a war crimes case due to this conflict and instigation of some

people," claimed Borhan.

Replying a question, Borhan, who introduced himself to The Daily Star as a freedom fighter, said, "I don't know where he [Mobarak] was in 1971 and what he did during the war. I do not even know Mobarak's age."

Borhan's fellow party politician Nowab said Mobarak was around 60 but he tried to conceal his real age.

MOBARAK'S SAY

When contacted over the telephone, Mobarak brushed aside the allegation brought against him and said he was only 13 years old in 1971.

"I was never involved in Jamaat-e-Islami. I am anti-Jamaat," he claimed.

"I had been the organising secretary of Mugra union Awami League for 17 years," said Mobarak, adding that he was not involved in any political party before 1996.

"I will appear before the court tomorrow [Thursday] with courage. If the allegations have basis, I will face the trial," he added.

CASE BACKGROUND

The investigation agency sources yesterday said on May 3, 2009, Khodeja filed the murder case against Mobarak with a Brahmanbaria court.

When Mobarak sought bail from the High Court, it ordered him to surrender before the Brahmanbaria court, which sent him to jail on October 19, 2011.

The Brahmanbaria court sent him to jail saying that the case was related to crimes against humanity and it was the international crimes tribunal's jurisdiction whether to grant bail.

When Mobarak sought bail at the tribunal, on July 16, 2012, it granted him bail and asked the investigation agency to probe the allegations.

The tribunal extended the tenure of his bail twice and fixed today for him to show up at the tribunal.

OTHER CASES Investigator Hannan yesterday said the agency was investigating 11 war crimes suspects and had already completed probes against 12 others.

Trial of eight Jamaat-BNP leaders is pending with the two tribunals while Tribunal-2 delivered the verdict in a case against expelled Jamaat member Abul Kalam Azad.

Clarification

The registrar of the Supreme Court has drawn the attention of The Daily Star to yesterday's lead story headlined "Petitions pile on Tribunal-1" where it might appear that we mentioned Justice Nizamul Huq as the chief justice.

We would like to clarify that Justice Nizamul Huq was the chairman, in other words, chief of International Crimes Tribunal-1, and he is not the chief justice of the Supreme Court.

Patuakhali

FROM PAGE 1 day after 50 people were injured in a factional clash of BCL activists on the campus over submitting a tender.

"We made the decision to ensure a peaceful atmosphere on the campus," PSTU Registrar Md Nawab Al told The Daily Star yesterday afternoon.

The authorities also formed a probe body to investigate Tuesday's violence that brewed on the campus but spilled onto the adjacent market affecting local businesses.

Business owners of Pirtala Bazar enforced a daylong hartal in Dumki upazila town yesterday protesting the attacks on their establishments during the clash.

All shops in the bazaar remained closed and hartal supporters burned tires on the road.

Abul Hossain, secretary of bazaar committee claimed that over 150 shops in the bazaar were ransacked causing Tk 50 lakh worth of damage.

Meanwhile, BCL central committee asked PSTU's unit president and general secretary to refrain from conducting any organisational activities until further instructions, said Arifur Rahman Pial, joint secretary of BCL, PSTU unit.

The committee also formed a three-member body to investigate the incident, Pial said.

Fresh petitions

FROM PAGE 20 court proceedings against expatriate legal expert Ahmed Ziauddin and the other seeking explanation from the attorney general whether Ziauddin was appointed as a legal adviser to the court.

Rejecting the petitions, the tribunal moved on to rehearing the closing arguments of Sayedee's case.

The defence yesterday completed placing its arguments on eight out of the 20 charges brought against Sayedee.

The defence was supposed to finish arguments yesterday but the tribunal eventually gave them more time following repeated request of the defence team.

The Tribunal-1 yesterday adjourned the proceedings on war crimes case against Motiur Rahman Nizami until February 3 and that on SQ Chowdhury's case until January 28.

Meanwhile, Tribunal-2 yesterday completed recording the cross-examination of Jahidul Islam, the ninth prosecution witness in the case against BNP leader Abdul Alim.

The three-member tribunal, led by Justice Obaidul Hassan, adjourned the case proceedings until February 4.

The tribunal also recorded the testimony and cross-examination of the 16th prosecution witness in the case against Jamaat leader Muhammad Kamaruzzaman before adjourning the case until January 28.

Ejabuddin Miah, assistant librarian of Bangla Academy, testified as a seizure witness in the case and exhibited several copies of newspapers of 1971.

Meanwhile, the prosecution sought action against BNP leader MK Anwar in connection with his comments about the trial proceedings at the tribunal.

Prosecutor Rana Dasgupta had verbally sought action against Anwar but the tribunal asked him to bring in a written allegation.

PM spurs WB on Padma

FROM PAGE 1 channel asked if she had any discussion with Russian President Vladimir Putin during her recent Moscow visit about Padma bridge funding and whether she senses any conspiracy involving the \$2.9 billion project.

The WB cancelled its \$1.2 billion funding in the project on June 29 last year, saying it had proof of a "corruption conspiracy" involving Bangladeshi officials, executives of a Canadian firm and some individuals.

The global lender on September 21 decided to revive the loan after Bangladesh agreed to the bank's terms and conditions.

Hasina said, "It is not acceptable to stop the work on the excuse that a corruption conspiracy, not any graft, took place. We have done nothing wrong."

"Analyse the corruption conspiracy formula, and you will find if things work that way, no investment could be made in Bangladesh, no work done."

Criticising the WB, Hasina said, "The lender not only suspended its funds but

purpose behind it," Hasina told the journalists.

Luis Moreno Ocampo, the chairman of the WB external panel, wrote a letter to the ACC chairman on January 9. ACC Commissioner Mohammad Shahabuddin on January 14 told reporters that the commission received the letter three days back and the panel was happy with the ACC probe.

The Daily Star published the WB panel's letter on January 15, and the ACC commissioner's statement clarifies that the ACC got it much before the letter was published in the newspaper.

The prime minister said the project's cost went up because her government wanted to build it with both roadway and railway tracks, and also due to its technical complexity.

The bridge could be constructed at a lesser cost if built with only roadways for vehicular movement.

She indicated that if the WB does not finance the project, the bridge would be built on a revised design with the provision of a rail link up to the Mongla port.

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