

One shot

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His wife Sultana said she had heard the gunshots. Jasim was joint convener of BNP ward-22 and a close associate of BNP leader Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu, who is currently in jail. Rony said he along with locals had chased the motorbike but the criminals managed to escape.

Locals and family members rushed Jasim to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where doctors declared him dead.

Hazaribagh police said they could not yet find the motive behind the killing.

In another incident, businessman Mohammad Iqbal Hossain, 28, was shot by three miscreants in Lalbagh.

Around 8:00pm, Iqbal, a former Chhatra League activist, was at a hair-dresser's opposite Ghora Shahid shrine, when the three men approached him. Seeing them, he tried to flee but they shot him in the back.

Nurul Muttakin, officer-in-charge of Lalbagh Police Station, said, "Iqbal is not involved in politics anymore. There are a number of cases against him. We are investigating if it was a result of any political conflict."

Iqbal was admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital for treatment.

Mahmuda Begum, 25, a housewife in Adabor, also took admission at DMCH with a bullet injury in her chest.

Talking to journalists at the hospital, she said, "Coming out from my house at Mansurabad in Adabor around 8:30pm, I was on my way to buy potatoes. It was then that a bullet hit me."

Biplob Kumar Sarker, deputy commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (Tejgaon), said pro-ruling party cadres were locked in internal conflict in the area and exchanging gunshots. The woman might have been hit at that time.

According to locals, a feud between a group led by a state minister and another by a former ward commissioner often leads to violent clashes.

Army

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sources, adding that the good quality cabs would be deployed at airports and railway stations.

Talking to The Daily Star, the communications minister said the Army Welfare Trust would invest in importing the cabs.

He said, "Retired officers and drivers of the army will be engaged to operate the service, which will be monitored by the communications ministry."

The minister said the police department had also showed interest in importing and operating taxicabs in the country. "We may consider this proposal too," he added.

Despite several attempts in the last few years, the government could not bring in new taxicabs.

"We had to relax a policy in this regard and only one local company has recently got the permission to import some taxis," he said explaining the reason behind agreeing to the army proposal.

"Dhaka, a city of 1.5 crore people, cannot be considered as a modern city unless it has good taxi service," added Quader.

Presently, about 1,000 cabs are operating in the capital and their service is way too poor.

Many people in Dhaka and Chittagong say the new taxicab service, once introduced, will bring huge relief to them. "We now feel like being hostages to the drivers of CNG-run auto-rickshaws. If the army takes over the taxicab service, we expect it to be safe and systematic," said Mobasher Ali, a resident of Uttara who commutes to Paltan and Motijheel areas.

"The taxi service in Chittagong was introduced a few years ago, but the cabs are seen no longer nowadays," said Aminul Islam, a resident of the port city, adding that private companies and rent-a-car services had replaced the taxi service there.



Music maestro Ustad Alauddin Khan's musical instruments and memories uncared for through time. Inset, Sur Samrat Alauddin Sangeetangon, run by some local music teachers, in Brahmanbaria.

PHOTO: SHEIKH SHAHIDUL ISLAM



USTAD ALAUDDIN KHAN

Legacy left in neglect

SHEIKH MD SHAHIDUL ISLAM, Brahmanbaria

The musical instruments and other articles made famous through being used by the maestro Ustad Alauddin Khan, a legendary classical musician of the subcontinent, have remained in neglect. Little has been done over the decades to ensure their preservation.

Ustad Alauddin Khan, who lived between 1860 and 1972, was a Bengali sarodiya and multi-instrumentalist, composer and one of the most renowned teachers of Indian classical music in the 20th century.

Successive governments have promised to establish a music complex and also a museum at Brahmanbaria Pourashava, but such promises have remained a pipe dream.

The ustad's musical instruments and other materials, including precious letters he received from monarchs and heads of state in his times, are gathering dust at the Sur Samrat Alauddin Sangeetangon in Brahmanbaria.

The brilliance of the musician brought him the title of "Sur Samrat" (king of melody) from the Queen of England, and earned him a number of other top awards, including Padma Bhushan, Biswa Bharati, Padma Vibhushan, Sangeet Academy Award, Desikottam and so on.

Alauddin, composer of many ragas, established Sur Samrat Ustad Alauddin Music College in Brahmanbaria in 1956, his dream being to turn it into a fertile ground for classical music.

Sadly enough, the college now has become

a mere institute with a different name, Sur Samrat Alauddin Sangeetangon, patronised by some local music teachers selflessly.

Abdul Mannan Sarker, general secretary of Sur Samrat Alauddin Sangeetangon, told The Daily Star that the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) had planned constructing an academic building on the college campus, but so far no visible progress is there.

"We appeal to the government to establish the proposed complex and include his biography in the textbooks," Sarker added.

Ustad Alauddin Khan's childhood memories, a mosque established by him, the twin graves of his father Ustad Sabdar Hossain Khan and mother Sunday Begum decorated by him, his vast properties, including a pond excavated by him at his birth place Shibpur, too are unprotected.

Towards the end of the '1980s, the local authorities planned a complex, including a music school, a library, a visitors' room, an auditorium and a picnic spot at Shibpur village.

Lakhu Khan, a relative of Ustad Alauddin Khan, donated 22 decimals of land for it, but it is yet to be implemented.

Pijush Kanti Acharya, a music teacher at Shilpakala Academy in Brahmanbaria, said, "Ustad Alauddin Khan is so respected that he is addressed as Baba in India, but unfortunately he remains almost unrecognised in his birth-place, Bangladesh."

Myanmar's gas starts flowing to China

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Corporation (CNPC), said in a report posted on its website.

"When torches flamed in the sky... a storm of applause and cheers broke out," China's official Xinhua news agency reported.

Construction began in June 2010, according to CNPC, and a parallel oil pipeline is also part of the project.

According to Xinhua, the gas pipeline will be able to carry 12 billion cubic metres annually, while the crude oil pipeline has a capacity of 22 million tonnes per year.

Under military rule, Myanmar -- which also counts tin and precious gems among its natural resources -- was a pariah state largely isolated from the rest of the world and subject to heavy international sanctions, but it maintained close economic links with China which for years was its major foreign influence.

But now that Myanmar is opening up politically and economically, more countries are setting up operations and seeking deals that sanctions had

previously prevented.

"Myanmar used to be sanctioned by the West and China was its only friend," the Global Times newspaper, which is affiliated with the ruling Communist Party, acknowledged in an editorial. "Nowadays, it has opened more to the West. This will reduce its passion in cooperating with China, but does not mean it will set itself against China."

In a warning that Beijing expects its economic interests to be protected, the newspaper cautioned Myanmar that it must ensure agreements regarding the project are fulfilled, no matter who eventually leads the country, where democracy activist Aung San Suu Kyi has entered parliament.

"China should be determined to supervise Myanmar in doing so," the paper said. "Myanmar should hold a serious attitude toward China, and Chinese will take (the Myanmar) people's attitude toward the pipeline as a test of their stance on China."

The pipeline opens up a new route for China's fuel

imports, and could help Beijing's attempts to promote economic growth in the vast and less developed west.

The Global Times editorial said: "This is another breakthrough in China's strategy of energy diversification and has obvious significance in reducing China's dependence on the Strait of Malacca for the import of oil and natural gas."

But the Shwe Gas Movement, a campaign group, says the project has sparked protests over issues including demands for higher salaries for local workers, and concerns among farmers about its environmental impacts.

Xinhua, in a commentary yesterday, blasted what it described as "Western criticism" of the pipelines, saying they were part of Beijing's effort to ensure energy security and would simultaneously benefit the people of Myanmar by providing jobs.

"Why do some Western critics make irresponsible remarks on the project? It stems from their shady mentality," Xinhua said.

Chinese nervousness about investments in

Myanmar comes after Myanmar said last week it had revised a controversial copper mine agreement with a Chinese company, after dozens of Buddhist monks and villagers were injured in a botched police raid.

Myanmar Minister of Mines Myint Aung told parliament that new terms gave the government 51 percent of the revenue, replacing a previous deal that was a joint venture between the Chinese firm and a holding company owned by the Myanmar military.

In 2011, Myanmar President Thein Sein stopped construction on the China-backed \$3.6 billion Myitsone Dam on the Irrawaddy river amid public opposition to the project, a move that led Beijing to call for its companies' rights and interests to be protected.

Myanmar plans to renegotiate billions of dollars of natural resource deals as it imposes tougher environmental standards and clamps down on corruption, the US-based Asia Society said in a report last month.

25 more fishing licences

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getting trawler licences and against their uses.

The new licences will be issued under the new policy, the ministry said.

Currently, 299 trawlers are licensed to fish in the Bay of Bengal. Of them, nearly 200 are engaged in fishing. Some deep-water fishing trawler operators claimed that catches have been sliding over the years.

Seeking anonymity, a top official of a deep-water fishing trawler operator said, "Issuing more licences without conducting a survey on the fish stock is not the right thing to do."

However, Mohammad Abdul Hye, state minister for fisheries and livestock, told The Daily Star, "We have decided to issue the licences following recommendations by an expert committee as the country has secured more area in the Bay after winning a maritime boundary dispute with Myanmar."

Asked whether the licences will be issued again on political considerations, he said the licences would be given to those people who are experienced in fishing in the Bay and capable of operating expensive trawlers.

"First, we will publish

advertisements in the newspapers. After receiving applications, we will scrutinise those before sending to the expert committee, who will make recommendations for or against awarding licences," he added.

After the expert committee's recommendation, the ministry will take a final look at the applications and send those to the Prime Minister's Office for final approval, noted the minister.

This is the third time since 2002 that the fisheries ministry has planned to allow increased fishing in the Bay, putting aside the recommendations of an expert committee.

The panel, during the tenure of the previous Awami League government (1996-2001), had suggested conducting a survey of the existing marine reserve before awarding any more licences for fishing in the sea.

The BNP-led government had overlooked the recommendation first in 2002, and issued 50 licences for marine fishing, including 10 for mid-water fishing. Most of them later had changed hands several times for huge sums of money before land-

ing with genuine fishing companies, complained industry insiders.

At the press briefing yesterday, Cabinet Secretary Musharraf said those who are not operating their trawlers as per licensing rules will be granted more time to fulfil the criteria. Licences of those failing to meet the criteria will be cancelled.

Among the seven agendas of the meeting, six were notifications of different ministries, mostly by the foreign ministry on foreign minister's visits abroad.

The cabinet was informed about the second Universal Periodic Review (UPR) meeting at the UN Human Rights Council held at Geneva from 29th April to 2nd May. A total of 196 suggestions were placed at the meeting, of which Bangladesh accepted 134. The remaining, including the suggestion on cancelling the death penalty and formal approval of homosexual relation, were discarded instantly.

"The foreign minister had discarded these proposals considering the socio-economic and religious values of the country," mentioned Musharraf.

The two directly involved

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The three-member tribunal led by Justice Obaidul Hassan recorded his testimony and adjourned the proceeding until today when Tawheed is set to face cross-examination.

Earlier, the court completed recording cross-examination of Prof Syed Anwar Husain, fifth prosecution witness in the case.

During his 75-minute testimony, Tawheed said he was the youngest of eight brothers and had learned about his father's abduction from his mother and his elder brother Shaheen Reza Noor.

He said his father was the news editor and executive editor of Daily Ittefaq during the Liberation War. He used to write articles in favour of the war and one of his articles was "Thak Bachhte Ga Ujar".

The Daily Sangram, mouthpiece of Jamaat-e-Islami, had published an article titled "Otoeb Thak Bachhio Na" countering his father's write-up, said Tawheed, adding that the newspaper published another article titled "Shironamer Karchupi" attacking his father for his pro-liberation journalism.

The 45-year-old witness gave a vivid description, which he had learned from his mother and brother, of how his father was abducted

by six to seven armed people.

"My family members gradually learned that martyred journalists Nazmul Haque, Nizam Uddin, Shahidullah Kaisar, Selina Parvin, Prof Giasuddin, Prof Munier Chowdhury and others were also abducted like my father," said Tawheed.

He added his family members and relatives had looked for his father's body in Rayerbazar but did not find him amid many decomposed bodies.

"As I was growing up, I tried to know why and how my father was abducted on the eve of the victory. I learned from my mother that the people who came to our house that night were Al-Badr men."

Tawheed said he was involved in the making of "War Crimes File" for British Twenty Twenty TV channel in 1995.

"Several people whom I had interviewed as a part of my research for the documentary talked about Al-Badr operation-in-charge Mueen Uddin was directly involved in intellectuals' killings. From late Atiqur Rahman I learned that Al-Badr chief executor Ashrafuzzaman Khan was also directly involved in the killings."

Several newspapers including Daily Purbadesh had published reports with photographs of Mueen and Ashrafuzzaman after December 16, 1971 mentioning them as "killers", said Tawheed.

The New York Times in January 1972 published a report with Mueen's photograph, he added.

A prosecution document for being very relevant.

The prosecution, however, still has an opportunity to submit further documents in the case.

Tawheed said Doly Chowdhury, sister-in-law of martyr Prof Mofazzal Haidar Chowdhury, ANM Golam Rahman alias Dulu Rahman, brother of martyr Golam Mostafa, Atiqur Rahman, former colleague of Mueen in Daily Purbadesh, Delowar Hossain, the lone survivor from Rayerbazar killing ground, were among the eyewitnesses.

"From these people I learned that Al-Badr operation-in-charge Chowdhury Mueen Uddin was directly involved in intellectuals' killings. From late Atiqur Rahman I learned that Al-Badr chief executor Ashrafuzzaman Khan was also directly involved in the killings."

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The New York Times in January 1972 published a report with Mueen's photograph, he added.

Meanwhile, the tribunal adjourned the proceeding of the case against BNP leader Abdul Alim until today following a time petition of the defence.

No move yet

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chain in front of the Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training (BMET) at Kakrail in the capital on July 22, demanding the rescue of their dear ones.

They also submitted an application to the authorities concerned in this regard.

"We asked the recruiting agency, Morning Sun Enterprise, to solve the problem. We also wrote to our labour counsellor in Iraq to look into the matter," Abdul Latif Khan, director (migration and protocol) of the BMET, told The Daily Star on Monday.

"You can't solve a problem overnight," Khan added.

Meanwhile, Shaon Ali, one of the migrant workers confined in the labour camp, on Sunday told The Daily Star over the phone: "Our condition is getting worse day by day. Some of us even got sick after drinking water on Saturday. The food given to us is also of poor quality."

An official from Bangladesh mission in Baghdad was supposed to visit their camp on Saturday, he said, adding that they were yet to see him.

Shaon, however, said the recruiting agent known as Karim had visited them last week.

Karim forbade them to speak out, and warned them that he [Karim] was no weaker a person, he added.

"We are passing our days in fear," Shaon said, appealing the government to save them from the despair.

EC chooses wrong path

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the EC scaled new heights, through setting new standards. The Huda team gave rise to people's high expectations which had earlier been damaged by the controversial EC, led by Justice Aziz.

So, what Rakibuddin required to do was to keep up the momentum inaugurated under Huda's leadership and take forward the good practices set in motion.

Alas! He and his team adopted a reverse stance from the very beginning. They considered the previous EC as their rival and started criticising their predecessors over some actions, including some proposals for electoral reforms.

In light of the experience the Huda-led EC had gathered while conducting the polls during their tenure, they prepared a set of proposals for bringing about more changes in electoral laws to plug the loopholes and to empower the EC further.

They sent the proposals to the law ministry in February 2009 to be translated into law.

However, the law ministry sent back the proposals to the new EC led by Rakibuddin for its consideration and review.

In the name of review, the Rakibuddin team damaged the spirit of the reform proposals prepared by the Huda

commission.

The Huda-led EC had drafted the proposal aiming to make it mandatory for the cabinet division and ministries of home, public administration affairs, and LGRD to consult with the EC before taking any decision related to elections during the parliamentary polls period.

The rationale behind this proposal was to allow the EC to have more clout on the government administration during the polls.

But the current EC dropped this proposal when it sent back the amendment proposals to the law ministry last week.

The more surprising task the EC did on Sunday was by deciding not to retain its sweeping authority to cancel an individual's candidacy in the parliamentary polls for gross violation of electoral laws.

The EC was given this authority before the ninth parliamentary polls in 2008 to make it stronger to oversee the polls.

After the EC's move on Sunday, the fate of the same authority EC enjoys to conduct the polls regarding other local government bodies, including city corporations, municipalities and upazila parishes, has become uncertain.

The Rakibuddin-led EC also rejected another of its predecessor's proposals, namely, a restoration of the

sweeping authority for the armed forces, deployed during the parliamentary polls, to arrest anyone without warrant for violation of electoral laws.

By rejecting this proposal, the current EC clearly sided with the AL-led government, which scrapped the provision of such authority for the armed forces in 2009.

The Huda-led EC felt the necessity of a restoration of the authority of the armed forces which was given before the 2001 parliamentary polls. But the present EC did not feel that way.

The activities of the present Election Commission have predictably triggered questions about its efficiency, indeed on whether it will be able to conduct the forthcoming parliamentary polls to public satisfaction.

The CEC and his colleagues could not exert their authority effectively at the recently held polls to five city corporations, as seen in their failure to enforce the electoral code of conduct.

Many EC officials, whose confidence was boosted under the Huda-led EC, now feel demoralised over the way the current EC has been running the show.

For Huda, it was a call of duty to lead the EC. But his successor Rakibuddin does not see things that way at all.