

# AL leader killed in bomb attack

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jessore

An Awami League leader, who was critically injured in a bomb attack by his rivals on Tuesday night in Jessore town, succumbed to his injuries at a hospital yesterday morning.

The dead, Nazrul Islam, 46, was general secretary of ward-1 of AL Jessore town unit and also president of Tyre-Tube Traders Association of Jessore unit. He used to reside at City College Para in the town.

Locals said a group of criminals, led by Ripon, brother of infamous Liton alias Fingye Liton, leading a gang under his name, attacked the business establishment of Nazrul in Monihar Bus Stand area around 8:30pm and hurled three hand bombs at the AL leader, leaving him seriously injured.

Locals rushed him to Jessore Medical College Hospital. Later, he was shifted to Khulna Medical College Hospital where Nazrul succumbed to his injuries around 6:00am.

Emdadul Haque Sheikh, officer-in-charge of Kotwali Police Station, said members of Fingye Liton group launched the attack following a previous enmity.

Police arrested seven people in this connection, he added.

The same gang shot Nazrul last month as he protested against its extorting money from traders.

After recovery, the AL leader at a press conference disclosed the gang's illegal activities before journalists on October 3.

Fingye Liton, who has fled to Nepal, is operating his criminal activities in Jessore over the phone, locals alleged.



Traders torch tyres to block the Dhaka-Khulna highway in Jessore yesterday after local Awami League leader and businessman Nazrul, inset, was killed in a bomb attack.

PHOTO: BANGLAR CHOKH

## PM pledges security for journalists

UNB, Dhaka

Deploing the recent attacks on journalists and TV channels, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday assured that her government would put in an all-out effort to ensure their security.

The assurance was made when TV channel owners under the banner "Association of Television Channels Owners (ATCO)" met Hasina at Gono Bhavan yesterday evening to express their concern over the recent attacks on journalists by pro-hartal activists.

The owners said once journalists and vehicles of media houses used to be outside the purview of hartals but recently the hartal supporters started attacking journalists.

The premier urged the TV channel owners to allocate more time for broadcasting the development activities taken up by her government.

About press freedom, Hasina said her government never ever put pressure on the media. "The media in Bangladesh is now fully free," she said.

The association's Vice-President Anjan Chowdhury of Maasranga Television and General Secretary Shykh Siraj of Channel i led the ATCO delegation.

## Permanent pay commission

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scales for the employees of Bangladesh Bank and four state-owned commercial banks by this time, Muhith said.

The finance minister disclosed this at a meeting with Bangladesh Audit & Accounts Officers' Association at his secretariat office.

In response to the association's demand for the upgradation of some posts of the cadre, the minister said the present government cannot take any policy decision after mid-November as per the Election Commission's plans for holding the upcoming national election.

The permanent pay commission would be comprised of two members; alongside there would be another pay and service commission, he added.

The chairman of the permanent pay commission will be the ex-officio chairman of the pay and service commission with a six-month tenure.

The pay and service commission will recommend the new pay scale for approval of the government. It will look

into the discrepancies in the salaries and allowances of the government staff. As soon as the commission is formed, the existing cabinet committee on discrepancies in the salaries and allowances of the government staff led by the finance minister will cease to exist.

The government committee on separate pay scale led by Cabinet Secretary Musharraf Hossain Bhuiyan finalised its recommendation on Sunday. It would submit the recommendations to the finance ministry in a couple of days, said an official of the ministry.

The committee recommended 11 grades instead of the existing 20. As per the recommendations of the committee, the maximum basic salary in the highest grade will be Tk 54,000, and the lowest basic minimum salary Tk 6,000.

The finance minister would meet the prime minister in a couple of days, and take the final decision on the permanent pay commission and the separate pay scale, the official added.

## 'Clear edge over PM'

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trywide, meeting sources claimed.

Khaleda, who was presiding over the standing committee meeting, talked about some points of the conversation and it seemed her talk with Hasina increased her confidence that she would keep that "edge over Hasina" in the days to come, the sources added.

On Saturday, Hasina called Khaleda to invite her for dialogue to end the deadlock regarding the next polls-time government. The tape of the conversation was aired by Ekattor TV early Tuesday and other media houses covered it extensively.

The two leaders had talked for 37 minutes, largely on their differences, and ended up having a heated debate over issues like hartal, celebration of Khaleda's birthday on August 15, and the August 21, 2004, grenade attack on an Awami League rally.

Moudud Ahmed, who was at the standing committee meeting, told The Daily Star yesterday, "The way she

[Khaleda] instantly responded to some issues raised by the prime minister was appreciable. So I praised her [Khaleda Zia] at the meeting."

A number of BNP standing committee's members said the disclosure of the telephone conversation has improved Khaleda's image of an uncompromising leader, which she became known for during the movement against the Ershad regime.

Some members praised Khaleda's strong memory while responding to Hasina about some old issues, meeting sources said.

"... It seems she [Khaleda] won the battle of words," a leader said wishing anonymity.

BNP, however, would try to get more political mileage out of the issue by launching a campaign against the government accusing it of releasing the tape, a senior BNP leader said.

The party would hold a press conference in a couple of days to begin the campaign, the leader added.

## Stop attacks on journos

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activists from attacking reporters and media houses and requested the government to give them protection.

Journalists and their vehicles have always remained outside the purview of hartals and blockades. Still at least 19 journalists, four media outlets and several of their vehicles have come under attack in the last five days, the statement said.

Besides, crude bombs were exploded in front of the residences of at least two journalists during the period.

"This sort of political attitude is really alarming. We the newsmen are suffering from a sense of insecurity as a result," read the statement issued by Mahfuz Anam, general secretary of the organisation.

The council mentioned that the role of mass media is very important in a democratic process and that democracy cannot hold out without independent and active media.

The mainstream media in Bangladesh are working to that end, and the independent and active media of the country are a glorious achievement, said the statement.

"In no way will we, the newsmen and the Bangladeshi people, let the achievement to be spoiled."

### BFUJ STATEMENT

Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ) also condemned in a statement the recent attacks on journalists and media houses and demanded that such attacks be stopped.

Attacks on journalists and media houses are tantamount to an attack on freedom of speech, said the union leaders, adding that political parties that believe in democracy have to ensure safety of journalists during their programmes.

Terming columnist Farhad Mazhar "enemy of the media", they urged the government to take legal action against him for instigating attacks on media people.

## Babar, four others protest innocence

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moved the High Court (HC) seeking transfer of the cases to the HC fearing that he would not get justice in Chittagong Metropolitan Special Tribunal-1.

On October 24, Babar's lawyer had moved another similar petition before the court. But Judge SM Mojibur Rahman of the tribunal rejected both the petitions as the HC was yet to give any order on Babar's prayer.

Former director general of National Security Intelligence (NSI) Brig Gen (retd) Abdur Rahim said he wanted to say something to the court.

The tribunal told him to submit a written testimony.

Earlier on October 23 and October 24, another 32 accused protested their innocence in the cases.

### REZZAKUL'S STATEMENT

Testifying in the court, Rezzakul said he was

arrested on May 15 in 2009 in the arms haul cases. On the same day, accused NSI official Wing Commander (retd) Shahab Uddin made a confessional statement under section 164 (of the Code of Criminal Procedure), where Shahab did not mention anything about him (Rezzakul).

Rezzakul claimed that a month later, Shahab Uddin was forced to make another statement implicating him.

According to the statement, Shahab Uddin was undergoing treatment at the Combined Military Hospital (CMH) in Dhaka in March, 2004. On March 30 that year, one Ameer bhai of Pakistan had met Shahab Uddin at the hospital cabin at 7:00pm. Shahab Uddin later came to know that Ameer bhai was actually Paresb Barua of Indian separatist organisation ULFA.

As Ameer bhai was going out of his cabin, Shahab could see Rezzakul standing near the stairway. He saw Rezzakul and Ameer coming down the stairs together.

Rezzakul argued that anybody, especially a person like Paresb Barua, needed to have prior permission from the CMH authorities to enter the hospital after the visiting hour (6:00pm). Moreover, it was impossible to see anyone at the stairway from any of the cabins on that floor of the hospital.

Investigation officer and CID ASP Moniruzzaman in his statement to the court told that he never had visited the CMH to make any enquiry about Paresb and Rezzakul's visit there, added Rezzakul.

He also denied the allegation brought against him by Shahab Uddin about holding a meeting with Ameer bhai and some NSI and Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI) officials in a safe house in Dhaka.

A total of 52 people have been accused in the two cases. Of them, nine are behind bars, 30 on bail and the rest have been absconding.

## Verdict in BDR carnage case

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Akhতারuzzaman of the Third Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's court, Dhaka.

Although trial of the case is being held at a makeshift court at Bakshibazar, the judge yesterday conducted the proceedings in his court room at Dhaka Court building where no accused were produced.

Earlier on October 20, the judge heard final arguments in the case and set October 30 for

judgment. A total of 850 people, including 823 BDR jawans and 23 civilians, were accused in the case. Four of the accused died.

Members of the BDR, now Border Guard Bangladesh, looted arms and ammunition from armouries at BDR's Pilkhana headquarters during the February 25-26 mutiny in 2009 and shot dead 57 army officers deputed who were on deputation to the BDR.

Seventeen others were also killed during the

33-hour mutiny.

The killers later dumped the victims' bodies in sewers and shallow graves, looted officers' houses and held their family members hostage at gunpoint.

Defence counsel Shamim Sardar yesterday submitted a petition to the court seeking permission to restart arguments in the case, saying they had to complete arguments hurriedly.

Shamim later told newsmen that the court turned down their plea.

## Violence worries foreign diplomats

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country find a way forward.

The opinions came yesterday afternoon after a diplomatic briefing at the foreign ministry on the current political situation.

Foreign Minister Dipu Moni and Prime Minister's Adviser HT Imam briefed the Ambassadors and high commissioners and representatives of the UN and donor agencies.

After the briefing Dipu Moni told reporters, "As friends, they [diplomats] expressed concern over the violence. They do not want to see any violence. They want to see the problems solved through peaceful talks."

On a question about diplomatic moves behind the scene, the foreign minister declined to comment.

"I can comment if they speak on record. We hope the diplomats would express their concerns in line with the norms, which is expected," she said, adding that the norm was to discuss any concern on Bangladesh with the authorities of Bangladesh, not outside.

Asked whether the diplomats were following the norms, she said, "I would say

most of them are."

Sources said the diplomats at the briefing apparently looked annoyed with what the foreign minister and the PM's adviser had said, as there was nothing new in their words.

Even no diplomat asked the minister and the adviser any questions despite repeated call to ask. They were seen rather busy talking to each other during the briefing.

Only Canadian High Commissioner Heather Cruden briefly spoke about their concerns over the violence and loss of lives. After the briefing, she told reporters, "We expressed our concern and frustration. We did not come here to dictate you. We want the political parties to hold dialogues to reach a solution."

Meanwhile, talking to journalists, Dipu Moni mentioned prime minister's invitation to the opposition leader for talks. She said, "We noticed with frustration that the leader of the opposition did not respond positively."

She said she had told the diplomats that the government was committed to holding a free, fair and credible election.

The foreign minister sought the diplomats' cooperation in sending international election observers to ensure transparency and accountability of the upcoming election process in accordance with the modalities to be decided by the Election Commission.

Later, talking to reporters US Ambassador Dan Mozena said he was very much encouraged by the recent developments that the PM and the opposition leader had spoken to each other.

"I think both the parties will come together to find a way forward. This is what the people of Bangladesh want."

Other than the US and Canadian envoys, ambassador and high commissioners over 50 countries, including Russia, the UK, the EU, France, Germany, India, China, Japan, Australia, Denmark, Netherlands, Myanmar, Indonesia, Nepal, and Saudi Arabia; and representatives of Korea, Italy, Bhutan, Maldives and Singapore; and UN Resident Coordinator Neal Walker were also present in yesterday's foreign ministry briefing.

## Oman to halt recruitment

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the statistics of Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training.

The statistics show that of the 3,39,500 Bangladeshi workers who have so far migrated abroad since January this year, as many as 1,11,726 migrated to Oman alone.

Officials of the embassy as well as manpower exporters in Bangladesh have expressed concern over the possible negative impact of the decision on the country's labour export.

"Of course the decision will affect our country's manpower export, but there are some other prospective sectors like farming, hospitality and service, where our people can find work," Rabiul told The Daily Star over the phone.

A spokesperson for Oman's manpower ministry told the Gulf News that the decision to suspend recruitment of foreign labour in the two sectors was taken to ensure regulation of labour market and review of the actual needs for labour in different activities.

## Bed in a bottle

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The Attrap'Rjves family hotel, in the Allauch commune, gives adventurous travellers the chance to spend a night under the stars without resorting to tents.

From £100 a night, outdoor lovers can enjoy a stay in a two-person bubble room, made from transparent plastic, and soak up stunning scenery, natural beauty and astronomy.

Each room comes with a complimentary telescope for budding stargazers to enjoy the night sky - they even have a chart to log their findings.

Visitors can choose from five rooms -

It is urgent to stop allowing smaller companies to offer visas and hire employees who obtain "free visa" and work illegally, he noted.

The spokesperson, however, asserted that the decision would not apply to listed companies in certain categories (excellent, international, consultant) and to those implementing government projects.

The manpower ministry of the Gulf country had cancelled 16,147 visas, including those of overstaying visitors, in the last one month and its police detained 2,320 expatriate workers in the last two months for violating residency and labour laws.

Contacted, Ali Haider Chowdhury, secretary general of Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies, said he hopes the Bangladesh government will take proper action in this regard.

Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Ministry Secretary Zafar Ahmed Khan, however, claimed that the decision would not significantly affect the

Suite Chic, 1001 Nights, Zen, Glamour and Nature - but willing staff will also cater to specialist requests.

Since opening in 2010, the isolated retreat has become the dream destination for holidaymakers looking for a private getaway.

Owner Murielle Giovansili said: "When guests first arrive they are extremely excited and happy to stay - it is the ultimate pleasure for us seeing them."

"It's a real experience for our guests. They can relive their childhood dreams or spend a romantic night together with loved ones. We've even had a wedding proposal."