

Two hacked to death in Bogra

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

A contractor of the Public Health and Engineering Department and an assistant teacher were hacked to death in Bogra last night.

The dead are Majid Mia, 28, of Sutrapur in Bogra town and contractor of the department, and Abdul Baki, 35, assistant teacher of BIAM School and College.

Unknown miscreants attacked Majid at Sutrapur Amtala around 7:45pm. Another youth named Shohag Mia, 30, who was with Majid at the time, was injured in the attack. Baki, who was also former secretary of Azizul Haque College Shibir unit, was hacked on Temple road in the town around 8:00pm.

The attackers could not be identified immediately, said Gaziur Rahman, assistant superintendent of police in Bogra.

He added the bodies were at Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College and Hospital.

A Jubo Dal leader, seeking anonymity, said Majid and Shohag had been attacked for money.

HC bail for 5 BNP leaders

FROM PAGE 16
hearing six bail petitions filed by the accused BNP leaders.

Police filed the two cases with Motijheel Police Station on September 24 and November 6 last year on charges of blasting crude bombs, vandalising vehicles and preventing cops from discharging their duties.

Opposition leaders during a hartal on November 5 blocked a road near Kamalapur Bazar and hurled crude bombs at law enforcers, according to the case statement filed on November 6 last year.

On September 24, according to the other case statement, BNP men from a procession vandalised a car and blasted several cocktails before Motijheel Ideal School and College in the capital.

The names of the five BNP leaders were not mentioned in the first information reports (FIR) of the cases. Police later showed the five arrested in the cases.

Moudud, Anwar and Rafiqul were detained in front of the Hotel Sonargaon in the capital on November 8, while the two others near BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's Gulshan residence on November 9.

FIVE BNP LEADERS SENT TO JAIL

A Dhaka court yesterday rejected bail and remand prayers of BNP leaders Moudud, Anwar, Rafiqul, Maj (retd) Hafiz Uddin Ahmed and Shimul Biswas in two separate cases and

sent the arrestees to jail.

Metropolitan Magistrate Asaduzzaman Nur passed the order after the Detective Branch of police produced the five before the court seeking 20 day remand for each in the two cases.

The cases were filed with Motijheel Police Station, one for the May 5 Hefajat mayhem and the other for vandalising cars and attempted murder of policemen on September 24.

The court also allowed police to interrogate the five BNP leaders within seven days at the jail gate, if necessary.

HANNAN SHAH AND SALAHUDDIN

Another HC bench yesterday directed the law enforcers not to arrest or harass BNP standing committee member ASM Hannan Shah and Joint Secretary General Salahuddin Ahmed without due legal process.

The HC orders imply that police cannot harass or arrest the two in any cases if there is no specific allegation against them.

The HC bench of Justice Salma Masud Chowdhury and Justice Habibul Gani passed the orders separately after hearing writ petitions by the leaders.

Salahuddin recently filed the petition saying that law enforcers had raided his residences in Dhaka and Cox's Bazar on December 30 and 31 to arrest him.

He apprehended that police might arrest him illegally although he is on bail in all six

cases filed against him.

The court also issued a rule upon the government to explain why the police raids at the residences of Salahuddin should not be declared illegal.

On the other hand, Hannan Shah submitted his petition saying that police might arrest him in any new case even if he secured bail in all the cases he has been accused in already.

In another development, Metropolitan Sessions Judge Md Zahirul Haque rejected bail petitions of Hannan Shah in three cases filed in connection with Hefajat-e Islam's mayhem at Motijheel on May 5 last year.

Hannan filed bail petitions challenging a lower court's bail rejection order.

Police picked him up from the capital's Baridhara on November 25 last year. He was implicated in the three cases filed with Motijheel Police Station.

COURT ALLOWS ACC TO QUIZ MOUDUD

The Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court in Dhaka yesterday allowed the Anti-Corruption Commission's (ACC) Deputy Director Harunur Rashid to interrogate Moudud Ahmed for three days at the jail gate in a case filed on charge of grabbing a piece of abandoned public land.

The anti-graft watchdog on December 17 had sued Moudud and his brother Manjur Ahmed for grabbing the land worth over Tk300 crore in the capital's Gulshan.

EC to meet

FROM PAGE 5
elections and asked field level officials to use polling centres of the January 5 national elections.

The EC also decided to defer elections to Rangpur's Pirganj upazila parishad as the by-elections to the Rangpur 6 parliamentary constituency is scheduled for February 20.

Armed forces personnel may be kept on standby for deployment, an election commissioner told The Daily Star, adding that the deployment decision will be based on "information of intelligence agencies and the prevailing situation".

In this context, the EC invited the principal staff officer of Armed Forces Division (AFD) to the meeting at the EC Secretariat's conference room at 11:00am.

The chief election commissioner will chair the meeting where top officials of the home ministry, AFD, Bangladesh Police, Rapid Action Battalion, Border Guard Bangladesh, Bangladesh Coast Guard and intelligence agencies are expected to be present.

A team of over 20 police and Bangladesh Ansar members may be deployed at every polling centre.

In the last upazila elections on January 22, 2009, teams of 14 to 16 law enforcers were deployed at every polling centre and armed forces personnel were deployed from January 20 to 24, said the EC sources.

AL to go tough

FROM PAGE 16

from the party, they said.

The central committee wouldn't interfere in the decision-making process, and the grassroots leaders would enjoy full freedom to pick contestants for the upazila parishad election that begins on February 19, according to the sources.

AL General Secretary Syed Ashraf Islam told The Daily Star yesterday that the party would send letters to its grassroots leaders, asking them to select a single candidate in every upazila.

At a meeting of the AL central working commit-

tee on Saturday, AL President Sheikh Hasina said the party doesn't want to see any rebel candidate in the next upazila parishad election.

The ruling party has taken the election seriously. It thinks a good performance in the polls will help strengthen the party at grassroots level. The party's central leaders would tour the organisational districts in the run-up to the polls, said the sources.

In the last upazila election in 2009, AL candidates emerged victorious in most upazilas. But later, BNP candidates gained the upper hand in the municipality and other local body polls.

14 workers stay

FROM PAGE 1

hands swelled," said Shafiqul Islam, one of the 14 Bangladeshi workers trapped there.

"Now that I am talking to you, I am worried that I might be beaten up if the supervisor comes to know it," he told The Daily Star over the phone yesterday.

Shafiqul is one of the 27 workers who had been sent to Iraq between January and February last year. They were all promised construction jobs at M Kodia Co General Trading at a monthly salary of \$350.

Four recruiting agencies -- Meghna Trade International, Morning Sun Enterprise, East Bengal Overseas and Idea International -- charged each of them Tk 4 lakh to send them there.

Bangladesh Migrants Foundation (BMF), a rights group of overseas workers, was also involved in the process.

However, once they reached Iraq they were left confined to the accommodation facility for months without work and good food as the employer could not start the project.

Following a series of demonstrations and repeated pleas of their relatives in Dhaka since July last year, 11 workers were repatriated by the employer on November 30.

Upon their return, they filed a human trafficking case the next day. This led to the arrests of BMF Chairman Joyal Abedin in December and Nasir Khan of Meghna Trade International early this month.

On December 14, the returnees demanded the immediate repatriation of the 14 remaining (two others have escaped the facility and their whereabouts could not be immediately known) workers. But their call went in vain.

EU to send troops in CAR

AFP, Brussels

The European Union agreed Monday to send hundreds of troops to the Central African Republic in a rare joint military mission aimed at ending months of sectarian violence.

Saying Europe was "deeply concerned by the extreme insecurity and instability" in the impoverished nation, EU foreign ministers gave "political approval" to the rapid deployment of a force expected to number between 400 and 600.

An EU-UN donors' conference in Brussels meanwhile gathered \$496 million (365 million euros) in pledges this year for the country, where almost one million people, or 20 percent of the population, have been displaced by fighting.

As the European foreign ministers discussed what will be the EU's first major ground operation in six years, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon warned the country was in "a crisis of epic proportions" and urged the world "to pull CAR back from the brink of further atrocities".

Spearheaded by Jamaat

FROM PAGE 1

the Malopara Hindus. He named 39 attackers, including the two sons of Aziz.

Maulana Aziz, who is also a madrasa superintendent, was involved in the Jamaat-Shibir mayhem following the pronouncement of the death sentence on Delawar Hossain Sayedee.

Witnesses and locals say many of the Malopara attackers were from Aziz's village Baliadanga, adjacent to Malopara.

Of his two sons, Mahfuz is the secretary of the upazila unit Islami Chhatra Shibir, the student wing of the Jamaat. Mahmud was a cadre of this organisation in Rajshahi University and now stays in the locality.

Conversations with the people of Malopara and its neighbouring villages revealed that Aziz and another Jamaat leader Maulana Yusuf had orchestrated the attack.

Mukul Sarker and Bishwajit Sarker were among the villagers who saw some youths at Yusuf's house, just two hundred metres off Malopara, on election day.

These were the cadres who intimi-

dated the voters who were on way to Chapatola madrasa polling centre around 10:00am on January 5.

Bishwajit told a government probe committee and journalists that the group Yusuf was sheltering hacked him in front of many villagers as he refused to give in to their threat.

Another villager named Bikash said he was beaten by those youths near Yusuf's house. He also saw them hurling bombs at the polling centre around 11:00am, he added.

Locals alleged some BNP men were also involved in the rampage.

A BNP activist of Prembag village requesting anonymity claimed that his party had wanted to stop the violence and even sought help from the police but did not get any timely response.

"Then we called our leaders in Baliadanga and requested them to resist the attackers. But these Shibir men would not listen to anyone other than their leaders," he said.

These findings of The Daily Star also corroborate the government probe report, submitted to the dis-

trict administration on January 15.

It notes that local ruling party supporters and activists were divided into two factions centring on the election; it made the attacker's job easier.

Talking to witnesses, The Daily Star as well as the probe body found that most of the attackers were very young, mostly madrasa students of adjacent villages.

These correspondents could not reach any of the local Jamaat leaders. All the known faces of Jamaat-Shibir have left the areas.

The Jamaat-e-Islami, a key component of the alliance, denies all the allegations.

In a statement posted on its website on Monday, its acting secretary general Shafiqur Rahman said, "Immediately after the farical election, the government engaged its party cadres to carry out attacks on the houses and establishments of the minorities."

Contacted, Shahabul Haque Sabu, secretary general of Jessore district BNP, said none from the 18-party alliance was involved in the attacks.

CLASH WITH JOINT FORCES

Injured Shibir man dies

STAR REPORT

A Shibir activist, who sustained bullet wounds during Sunday's clash with joint forces in Gaibandha, succumbed to his injuries at a hospital in Bogra yesterday.

The deceased is Shahinur Rahman Shohag, son of Kazi Shafiqul Islam of Khanabari village under Sundarganj upazila in Gaibandha.

Shohag, who was admitted to Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College Hospital in Bogra on Sunday, succumbed to his injuries around 3:00am yesterday, said Mir Rayhan Siddik, a sub-inspector of Silimpur police outpost in the town, reports our Bogra correspondent.

On Sunday, the activists of Jamaat-e-Islami and its student wing Islami Chhatra Shibir ambushed a police team while the law enforcers were raiding Kadamtala and Khanabari villages, known to be Jamaat-Shibir strongholds, in Sundarganj to arrest the people wanted in the cases filed in connection with the February 2013 violence in the district.

On information, members of the joint forces rushed to the areas to rescue the police team. The Jamaat men also attacked the joint forces, forcing the law enforcers to fire teargas shells and rubber bullets to disperse the unruly activists.

After five hours, the joint forces managed to rescue the police team.

No fewer than 55 people including 22 police personnel were injured in the clash.

However, Mozammel Haque, officer-in-charge of Sundarganj Police Station, said they had no information about death in police firing, reports our Gaibandha correspondent.

Upazila Nirbahi Officer of Sundarganj Abu Rafa Mohammed Arif also brushed aside the news of Shibir activist's death in the Sunday's clash, and said law and order had been restored in the areas.

Meanwhile, quoting family members, Shahidul Islam Manju, general secretary of Sundarganj upazila unit of Jamaat, said Shohag had been buried at his family graveyard after Maghrib prayers yesterday.

Manju said some of the injured Jamaat-Shibir activists had been admitted to different hospitals in Bogra after the clash.

On February 28, 2013, immediately after Jamaat leader Delawar Hossain Sayedee was sentenced to death for war crimes, Jamaat-Shibir activists attacked Bamondanga police outpost in Sundarganj.

They vandalised and torched the outpost and killed four policemen.

Later, a total of 32 cases were filed against 58,900 unnamed and 1,100 named Jamaat-Shibir activists in this connection.

Development after a cost

FRO M PAGE 1

tin-roofed houses for the Malopara victims. The villagers were also helping the BGB members and workers.

Some were busy felling trees to make space for new houses amid unplanned clusters of homes. BGB is making 400 square-foot houses which are even bigger than what the victims had earlier.

"We will build a total of 65 houses for them. In our first phase we have selected those houses which were mostly damaged in the January 5 attack. We want to finish the construction in a day or two," said Lt Colonel Mustafizur Rahman, director, BGB logistics, on Monday.

The house of Sanchita Barman is one of those eight houses BGB members are making in the first phase.

Sanchita and her four-year-old daughter Bipasha Barman fled when their house came under attack on January 5. When they came back a day later, they did not have anything to eat as the attackers had destroyed everything.

Some placards made by members of Gonojagoron Mancha, using a photo of Sanchita and Bipasha, were lying beside the piles of bricks brought for the construction.

Little Bipasha was found playing delightedly on the piles of brickbats and bricks. Obviously, she had never seen such activities in her village earlier.

"Now we are getting a better house. But we

are not sure whether we will be able to sleep in the house peacefully ever. Bipasha still cries out in her sleep," said Sanchita.

The people of Malopara have never seen development work in their village. After the January 5 violence, relief from many organisations began to pour in. They have been getting clothes, food, cash and utensils.

Even so, they are yet to have normalcy restored in their lives.

"We feel we are animals kept in a cage and people are coming to see us. We don't want warm clothes or food or roads and electricity. We just want peace. We just want to live in peace as we did before the attack," said Susoma Sarkar, one of the victims in Malopara.

Magoli Biswas, daughter of Dulal Biswas, has not been to her college since the attack. "I feel that something might happen if I go to college," she said.

Her three sisters do not go to school either. "Fear is deep-rooted in our hearts after the attack. We don't know how we can get relief from it," said Dipti Biswas, a housewife.

Officials of the district administration said they had arranged trauma counselling for the Malopara victims to help them deal with the trauma.

They have also set up a 30-member committee comprising people from Malopara and other villages which will work on building trust among the people of the

Grand reception at cost

FROM PAGE 16

Amid fog, students were lined up along the road stretching about 15km between Muladuli and Ishwardi.

"It's very cold but we have been forced to stand up along the road. We are doing it as our teachers have told us. We'll receive the minister," a class-six student of Bangabandhu High School of the upazila told The Daily Star.

A class-two student of Aronkola Primary School said, "Our teachers have asked us to be here to welcome him [the minister]. It's been three hours and we don't know when he'll come."

This newspaper is withholding the names of the students for their safety.

Many teachers were also seen standing along with their students. Teachers of different primary schools under the banner of primary teachers association of Ishwardi Upazila were seen holding banners to welcome Dilu.

A number of teachers said the upazila education office asked them to join the reception, but headmasters of several schools dismissed the claim.

"Closing down the school, we have willingly joined our students for the minister's reception," said Abdul Awal Matin, headmaster of Aronkola Primary School.

But other teachers said they were ordered to join the programme.

"The upazila primary education office asked us to join the reception programme and that's why we are here," said a teacher of Ashna Government Primary School. (The teacher's name has also been withheld for safety reasons.)

Contacted, Ishwardi upazila Education Officer Siddikur Rahman said: "Most of the schools and colleges that joined the programme have done so willingly. We did not issue any order."

Despite several attempts, the upazila primary education officer could not be reached over the phone.

More than 100 gates were set up in the upazila to welcome the minister. Authorities of some schools also set up arches at different points, allegedly under pressure from the ruling party leaders.

"Ishwardi people are delighted to have a minister for the first time since independence. So people gave him a royal reception," said Abul Kalam Azad Mintu, join secretary of Ishwardi upazila AL.

Different educational institutions and socio-political organisations set up gates to welcome him warmly, he added.

Dilu reached the reception venue at 2:30pm and thanked his constituents for the reception.

The minister could not be reached over his phone despite repeated attempts.

EU signs up for military mission in Central Africa

AFP, Brussels

The European Union agreed Monday to send hundreds of troops to the Central African Republic in a rare joint military mission aimed at ending months of sectarian violence.

Saying Europe was "deeply concerned by the extreme insecurity and instability" in the impoverished nation, EU foreign ministers gave "political approval" to the rapid deployment of a force expected to number between 400 and 600.

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Padma fund now

FROM PAGE 16

accommodated from other sources, he said, adding that the revised budget of the current FY would be finalised next month.

As to how the government would handle the requirement, the minister said the revenue earning target and the Annual Development Programme (ADP) would be slashed.

The ADP would be downsized, as only a small portion of the allocation made to the Padma bridge project could be spent in the current FY, he said.

After the development partners, including the World Bank, had withdrawn their funding for the bridge on corruption allegations last year, the government decided to implement the project with own fund.

Yesterday, the finance minister once again confirmed that the government was still firm on the decision. However, if any development partner was interested to finance, it would be accepted.

Asked whether any of the partners have shown fresh interest in the project, the finance minister replied in the negative.

He, however, said that the government in October last year had sought Asian

Development Bank's (ADB) assistance in the bid evaluation, but the bank was yet to respond.

The minister also said there had been rumours that Japan International Cooperation Agency (Jica) was contemplating to finance the project. The government had reminded ADB and Jica that if they wanted to get involved in the project in any way, that must be done by March or April.

Muith said the government wanted to complete the bid evaluation by this time as three parties had already submitted their final proposals.

According to him, even if the project does not see much progress in this fiscal year, the government would complete the bridge within the next four years.

In this context the minister said the government had been elected for five years and they were preparing plans accordingly -- which is how to construct the Padma bridge as quickly as possible.

On the January 5 elections, Muith said BNP had played a totally foolish game.

"Now there is no scope for early polls and at the same time there is no pressure from abroad in this regard," he added.