

# 8 killed as bus rams microbus

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bagerhat

Eight people were killed when a bus rammed a microbus at Tayeb Ali Battala in the district's Fakirhat upazila yesterday evening.

The dead are Jewel, driver of the microbus, Moin, his wife Munni, their four-month old son Mahim, Dola, a relative of Moin, and her daughter Afsana Mim, Enayet Hossain, owner of the microbus, and police constable Amir Hossain Sagar. They hailed from Rayermohal in Khulna city.

Abdul Mannan Farazi, officer-in-charge of Katakhal Highway Police, said the victims by a microbus went to visit the house of their relative at Koliganti village of Chitalmari upazila in the morning.

The accident happened on the Khulna-Mawa highway as the Madaripur-bound bus rammed the microbus when the victims were returning home to Khulna city around 6:15pm. Six people in the microbus died on the spot and two others were critically injured, said Mannan.

Of the injured, one died at Khulna Medical College Hospital and another at a clinic in Khulna city.

Following the accident, vehicular movement came to a halt on the Khulna-Mawa highway for about one and a half hours.

Police seized the bus.

Bagerhat Deputy Commissioner Sukur Ali and Superintendent of Police in Bagerhat Nizamul Haque visited the spot.

## Claims vs reality

FROM PAGE 1

Hours after the murder of Ekram on May 20, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in a statement said the evil forces against the spirit of independence and Liberation War, which wanted to weaken the Awami League organisationally through killing and terrorism, might have killed him.

Soon after the murder, a case was filed accusing a local BNP leader.

Based on witnesses' statements, media reports now suggest that the killers were from the ruling party. Probable involvement of local AL lawmaker Nizam Hazari is getting clearer. The role of his cousin and the son of a local AL woman leader is being talked about. Not only witnesses are talking about it but also pictures of the murder captured by witnesses show the presence of ruling party men.

Quoting several arrestees, Rab yesterday said Jihad Chowdhury,

joint general secretary of Fulgazi upazila unit of AL, had master-minded the murder of Ekram.

In the sensational seven murders in which a city corporation councillor was abducted and killed in late April in Narayanganj, a similar thing happened.

The prime minister on May 1 blamed the BNP for all the abductions and disappearances.

But now it is clear that it was carried out by AL men with the help of others. The alleged involvement of the influential Osman family is also surfacing. The latest telephone conversation of Shamim Osman, the most influential AL leader in Narayanganj, leaked to the press has also generated a lot of questions. Shamim has allegedly helped the prime accused Nur Hossain, a local AL leader, leave the country.

It now seems the knee-jerk predictions of the prime minister were

wrong.

In case of the sensational killing of Biswajit, a tailor in old Dhaka, on December 8, 2012, the Prime Minister's Office played the most shocking role.

At a press conference on December 13, 2012, the PMO claimed the murderers were former members of Jamaat's student wing Islami Chhatra Shibir, and that no Chhatra League men were involved.

The rest is history. The media flashed the details of the murder and showed how they are involved with the AL's student wing. The court sentenced eight Chhatra League men to death. Earlier, the PMO tried to link three of the murderers to either Jamaat or Shibir.

So what does all this mean?

It shows the prime minister and her office were making too many comments too early about the inci-

dents, and their initial statements were wrong.

Or can one be wrong to say that this was done to hide the fact that ruling party men were involved in the crimes? If this was the motive then this also served the government to kill two birds with one stone -- while the ruling party men were saved, the opposition was put under fresh pressure.

But the greatest danger is when the government makes such statements, the process of justice suffers. Think about the investigating officer; how can one expect him to launch a fair investigation and unearth involvement of ruling party men when the prime minister had claimed otherwise?

This is leading to a dangerous situation. The criminals, if they belong to the ruling party, have reasons to feel protected. And justice suffers.

## Dhaka for closer ties

FROM PAGE 16

after the installation of the new government in New Delhi," said a diplomat at the Indian High Commission in Dhaka.

Indian President Pranab Mukherjee has officially invited his Bangladeshi counterpart Abdul Hamid to visit India. President Hamid has accepted the invitation and the tour itinerary will be finalised following discussions through diplomatic channels.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina left for Japan last night and she is to return on the 29th. She would go to China on June 6.

"Her visits will reaffirm the government's determination to keep Bangladesh's international profile high and make its voice heard by foreign powers," said a senior foreign ministry official.

Dhaka will also host several VVIPs, including Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen on June 16-18. Ministry sources said officials were working out more high profile visits from home and abroad.

Russia is extremely happy as Bangladesh abstained from voting at the UN General Assembly resolution on Russia's annexation of Crimea, which eventually worked in favour of Russia.

Tokyo sent Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida to Dhaka on March 21 to invite Sheikh Hasina to visit Japan. He was the first foreign minister to visit Dhaka after the 10th parliamentary polls.

Diplomatic sources said Japan had pledged to provide \$1.18 billion as Official Development Assistance (ODA) this year to be spent in five projects, including the installation of a coal-fired power plant at Matarbari island of Moheshkhali.

According to officials, the number of Japanese companies in Bangladesh has been on the rise -- from 61 in 2006 to 176 in 2013.

Beijing sent Li Jiheng, governor of China's Yunnan province, to Dhaka on March 29 to invite Hasina to visit China.

Neither the US nor any of the member states of the 28-member European Union have yet greeted Hasina on her govern-

ment's re-election through the January 5 national polls.

There has been no major bilateral engagement with these countries. The US and the EU are maintaining working relations with the government.

The US and EU ambassadors in Dhaka in their recent remarks before the press have said their countries still maintain the stance announced immediately after the January 5 elections that called for an immediate dialogue and holding transparent, inclusive and credible elections as soon as possible to reflect the will of Bangladesh's people.

**PM'S FOREIGN TRIPS**

Official sources said Bangladesh and Japan were expected to ink several deals during the PM's visit to promote trade and investment.

On return from Tokyo, Sheikh Hasina will pay a six-day visit to China at the invitation of her Chinese counterpart Li Keqiang. She will first join the inauguration of the second China-South Asia Exposition in Kunming of Yunnan province.

From Kunming, she will go to Beijing to hold an official meeting with Li Keqiang.

Ahead of Hasina's visit, China has announced that it will provide Bangladesh with a grant assistance of 100 million Yuan to support the development of Bangladesh's armed forces. With the grant money, China will supply short range surface-to-air missiles to strengthen Bangladesh's air defence and arrange training for defence personnel.

To promote military cooperation between the two countries, Beijing sent a 21-member defence delegation headed by General Xu Qiliang, vice-chairman of the Central Military Commission of China, to Dhaka. The two sides inked four defence deals during the visit on May 11-13.

Besides, China on May 13 sent Yan Junqi, vice-chairperson of the standing committee of China's National People's Congress, on a three-day visit to Dhaka to hold talks with Bangladesh's leaders.

## Hasina off to Japan

FROM PAGE 1

Kishida told a press conference in Tokyo while making a formal announcement on May 16.

His Bangladesh counterpart AH Mahmood Ali in a pre-departure press conference in Dhaka yesterday said the visit would open "a new horizon" in the bilateral partnership.

Hasina, who left for Tokyo last night, would lead a 109-member delegation including a 45-member business team. This is the first bilateral tour after the January 5 general elections, about which Japan along with some other western countries has reservations.

Upon her return from Japan, the premier is set to pay another six-day official visit to China beginning on June 6.

Foreign Minister AH Mahmood Ali said Bangladesh would seek Japanese finance in the megaprojects that included Ganges Barrage project, a multimodal and multilane tunnel beneath the Jamuna river, a second nuclear power plant (NPP), a rail bridge parallel to Bangabandhu Bridge over the Jamuna, eastern bypass road and restoration and excavation of four rivers surrounding the capital, and improvement of Mawa-Kalna-Narail-Jessore road with construction of a bridge at Kalna.

The minister, however, could not say the amount of the new Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) Bangladesh would seek as Dhaka and Tokyo continued discussion on financing these projects.

"Nothing has yet been finalised about funding those big projects.... It will depend on our negotiations," he said in reply to a question.

During Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida's visit to Dhaka on March 22, Japan made a pledge of \$1.18 billion under the 35th ODA to Bangladesh to finance five projects in energy and infrastructure development.

According to the programme schedule, Hasina would hold a summit meeting with her Japanese counterpart Shinzo Abe tomorrow afternoon mainly to discuss Japanese economic and technical assistance to Bangladesh.

She would also have an audience with the Emperor of Japan on Monday and the Japanese prime minister would host a banquet in honour of his Bangladesh counter-

part.

The two countries are scheduled to sign a joint communiqué on May 26 after the Hasina-Shinzo summit talks.

Asked about the risk of having nuclear power plants, the foreign minister said accident might occur, but operation of the plants did not stop in other countries. "We shouldn't stay idle fearing accidents," he observed.

In his opening remark earlier, the minister said the visit of the prime minister was a timely tour.

He said Japanese investors felt encouraged to make big investments in Bangladesh. Hasina would also address a conference of the Japanese investors and meet top executives of JICA, JETRO and JBIC.

Dhaka wants liberalisation of the rules of origin and seeks duty-free access of Bangladeshi products to the Japanese market. Mahmood expressed the hope that Japan would continue its ODA assistance to Bangladesh.

Foreign Secretary Md Shahidul Haque, Secretary (Bilateral) of the Foreign Ministry Mustafa Kamal and other senior officials were present.

**NOTHING OFFICIAL ON MODI VISIT**

Refuting media reports, Foreign Minister AH Mahmood Ali yesterday said there was no official announcement yet regarding Indian Prime Minister-designate Narendra Modi's visit to Bangladesh but Dhaka wants to see such a visit.

"We don't know about it (Modi's visit) yet. Let it be done first. Let him take oath first. We want to see that he pays his first foreign visit here," he said in response to a question at a press conference at the foreign ministry.

Earlier, Indian daily Business Standard reported that Modi's first official visit as head of government would likely be in Dhaka, where he was expected to sign the much-awaited Teesta water-sharing agreement.

The issue was discussed at length during Modi's telephonic conversation with Hasina, who not only requested Modi to make Bangladesh his first foreign destination as prime minister, but to also consider Dhaka as his "second home," said the report.



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