

# VISITING 'HIZB-UT TAHRIR MAN' Police, rights boss at odds

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka Metropolitan Police Commissioner Benazir Ahmed yesterday said the National Human Rights Commission chairman's visit to an alleged militant at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital was a "violation of law".

"He [Nafiz] is a self-proclaimed criminal. His organisation [Hizb-ut-Tahrir] is banned. If someone goes against the ban, it will be a violation of law," the DMP boss told journalists at a programme at DMP Media Centre.

The programme was arranged in recognition of the bravery of three persons who helped police arrest some spooks during the shutdown on November 6.

NHRC Chairman Prof Mizanur Rahman, however, refuted the DMP boss's remarks and said he had visited bullet-hit Nafiz as per the NHRC Act.

The chairman said he was empowered to visit any place and person deemed important to monitoring issues of human rights.

"We always say that it is the court which delivers verdict on whether anyone is criminal...and even for a criminal, we must ensure the minimum human rights," Prof Mizanur told The Daily Star over the phone.

He cited article 12 of the NHRC Act 2009 that states: "The Commission shall perform...To inspect any jail or any other places where persons are detained or lodged for the purpose of correction, custody, treatment, or such other welfare, and to make recommendation to the government thereon for the development of those places and conditions."

Shooting point-blank in someone's leg only on the basis of allegation cannot be accepted, he said.

Prof Mizanur on Thursday visited Nafiz, 32, an alleged activist of banned Islamist outfit Hizb-ut-Tahrir, at the DMCH. Nafiz, who received bullets in his left leg and lower back on October 17, alleged he was shot point-blank by police after a chase. He denied involvement with Tahrir.

During his visit, the NHRC chairman also said when police personnel hailing from "one particular district" got custody of the accused, they thought they were above everything and that the law could not touch them.

"They even think that instructions of their superior officials are not worth obeying," he said, casting doubt on whether the chain of command in the police force is properly maintained.

Refuting such allegations, the DMP

**Jubo League leaders go into a self-promotion frenzy with the excuse of the youth body's 42nd founding anniversary. They occupy huge hoardings and put up banners, clockwise, at Bijoy Sarani, Russell Square and Farmgate in the capital and at Lalkhanbazar in Chittagong.**

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN, ANURUP KANTI DAS



# Architect Mainul no more

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where they rejoice and mourn, while paying homage to the gallant sons and daughters who laid down their lives during the Liberation War.

And the man whose signature work drew seas of people year after year made the final exit yesterday.

Architect Syed Mainul Hossain breathed his last at National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases (NICVD) at 2:30pm. He was 63.

He left behind his two daughters and a host of friends and family members and well-wishers to mourn his death.

President Abdul Hamid, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia expressed deep shocks at his demise.

Mainul had been suffering from diabetes. He had a massive heart attack on Sunday morning and was taken to a hospital next to his Shantinagar residence, his cousin Zulfikar Rahman said.

Mainul was shifted to the NICVD around 11:00am.

The NICVD authorities had constituted a medical board to treat him.

"Initially, his condition had been improving and he had been communicating with us. But he started com-

plaining again since [yesterday] morning. And suddenly he suffered a cardiac arrest from which we could not revive him," Abdullah-Al-Safi Majumder, director of NICVD, told The Daily Star.

Mainul's body was taken to his house first and then to Birdem mortuary where the body will be kept till his elder daughter returns to Bangladesh tomorrow, said Mainul's another cousin Iftekhar Rahman.

The body will be taken to Buet, where he studied, tomorrow morning. Then, his coffin will be kept at the Central Shaheed Minar for people to pay homage. Mainul will be buried at Martyred Intellectuals' Graveyard in Mirpur, he added.

Mainul's design for the National Memorial in Savar was selected from amongst 57 submissions in the national competition for the project's design in 1978.

Composed of seven isosceles triangular planes varying in size, the memorial's main monument, 150-foot tall, symbolises the valour and sacrifice of those who died fighting for liberation. It also symbolises the rise of Bangladesh from beneath the ground.

Mainul's friend and university roommate, Badrul Haider, an architect, remembers how Mainul came

to his place with the components of his model in his hands on the submission day.

"An open competition for the design for the national monument at Savar was announced in 1978. Mainul along with others submitted their designs. But the jury were not satisfied with the submissions first time around," he told The Daily Star.

So, there was a second competition.

"The day before the submission, he came to my Fakirapool house with the components. And when he assembled them on a table I knew it for certain that the one of mine was nowhere near his," recalled Badrul.

He also said when they submitted the designs at the Architecture Department of PWD Bahban the next day all other competitors were certain that no one's work would be comparable to Mainul's.

The main structure of the National Memorial was built along with the artificial lake and other facilities in 1982. It opened for public on December 16 that year.

The seven isosceles of the memorial stand for the seven Birshreshthas (the seven war heroes recognised as the greatest of all war heroes for their extraordinary valour) and the seven

movements from 1952 till the 1971 Liberation War.

Born in Dhaka in 1951, Mainul received many awards, including the Ekushey Padak, for his architectural excellence and other works.

He enrolled in Buet in October 1969. He joined Bangladesh Consultant Ltd, an engineering firm, after completing his education in 1976.

Later, he joined Shahidullah and Associates Ltd, another engineering firm. While at this firm, he and Badrul set up a firm named Grihayonbid and worked together till early 1990s. He then decided to work independently, said Badrul.

Mainul had designed many vocational training institutions and vocational teachers training institutions.

Apart from architecture, Mainul had interest in mathematics and politics, said Badrul, adding that over the past few years he lived a secluded life at his house following his divorce.

"A friend like him is rarely found," he said with a choked voice.

Replying to a question, Badrul said Mainul did not get the appreciation he deserved in his lifetime. "No one came to see him."

# Jubo League, this time

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Agargaon Jubo League leader Md Masum was found busy hanging up a large banner on a billboard just opposite the IDB building.

He claimed they paid the owner an "honorarium" to hire the hoarding for 15 days. But he refused to mention the amount and name of the owner.

Some take it as an easy way to publicise themselves. Banners, festoons and posters flooding the capital bear portraits of Jubo League men -- from unit to central committee leaders. For this, they use utility poles, roadside space, road divider, foot bridges and buildings by main thoroughfares.

In some cases, petty leaders got more prominence than Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina or Jubo League founding chairman Sheikh Fazlul Haque Moni.

The Jubo League also has built bamboo-made arches at different points, especially all entrances to the capital, obstructing traffic. City corporation officials say none took permission for this.

Contacted Ansar Ali Khan, chief executive officer of Dhaka South City Corporation, said they would

take measures to remove those illegal arches soon.

Jubo League men have also grabbed several billboards in Chittagong to mark the anniversary, reports our correspondent.

Other divisional headquarters, however, were spared this nuisance as the organisation's central leaders have instructed those local units to focus on bringing activists and supporters to the "Jubo Jagoron" programme in the capital on November 15.

Top Jubo League leaders claim they have formed a committee to check irregularities regarding the anniversary celebration. The committee was yet to receive any complaint, they said.

About the grabbing of billboards in the capital, Jubo League chief Omar Faruk said they did not ask anyone to carry out campaign in this manner.

"Jubo league men have done this on their own. Some of them have launched aggressive campaigns just to come to limelight; this is embarrassing," he said.

"We have already given instructions for removal of all those banners and such other publicity materials after November 16."



PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

Workers laying the asphalt on the Dhaka-Chittagong highway near Chandina of Comilla yesterday. Work on the expansion of the highway into a dual carriageway is finally stepping up.

# Expansion work resumes at last

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carriageway in January 2010, had been demanding an additional Tk 500 crore to finish the job.

The Ministry of Road Transport and Bridges did not entertain the demand and put pressure on the company to finish the job in time. But, the company refused in violation of its contract.

Sources in the ministry say things have changed after the company won the \$0.68 billion contract for river training in the Padma Bridge project in September this year and it is now concentrating on the highway expansion work.

The company's apparent neglect is the prime reason behind slow progress of the work, which was originally

scheduled to be wrapped up by December 2012 but the deadline had to be extended twice -- first up to December 2013 and then December next.

The project costs also spiked to Tk 3,190 crore due to inclusion of three rail overpasses and five bridges, changes in its design, price adjustments and the Chinese company's apparent reluctance in getting a move on.

The costs may rise even further as the government is going to soon revise the project for the third time.

Officials concerned, however, express the hope for speedy work in the coming months.

The progress the Chinese firm has achieved so far in its seven packages of the project is around 39 percent, as of October last.

Two local companies are expanding a 52km stretch of the highway and their progress is much better.

Reza Construction has completed about 72 percent of a 37.7km stretch, while Taber Brothers has done 69 percent of its 15.3km stretch of the highway.

Altogether, the three companies have completed 77km of the 192km highway, which is considered the economic lifeline of Bangladesh.

The government, meanwhile, is now forced to raise the consultancy fees for the highway expansion

project by 71 percent, as the consultant would have to stay longer due to the delay in project completion.

The road transport and bridges ministry last week proposed the cabinet committee on purchase to increase the consultancy fees by Tk 20.6 crore, bringing the total to Tk 49.65 crore, document shows.

However, timeframe for completion of the project, including defect liability period, would be December 2016, says the proposal.

In 2010, a joint venture of Consulting Engineering Services (India) Pvt Ltd and Dev Consultants Ltd (Bangladesh) were appointed consultants for overseeing the work of 10 road packages and construction of two bridges on the highway.

Following the slow progress of the highway expansion project, the Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation Division (IMED) last year conducted a study, which found that every contractor had quoted 14.47 percent lower than the government-estimated rates.

The report said the contractors were working at a very slow pace but did not say why.

Expanding the highway is one of the six high-priority projects of the government.

It was initially undertaken by the BNP-Jamaat government in 2005 but due to a series of procedural hurdles and two failed tenders, the project did not see any light of the day.

Assuming office in 2009, the Awami League-led government took up the project and floated a fresh tender to upgrade the highway, which is the most used road for exports and imports.

Heavy traffic sometimes doubles the six-hour travel time, hampering foreign trade and causing public sufferings.

The government in January 2010 signed deals with the three firms. But the work began in 2011 as problems related to the appointment of the consultant ate up a year.

# 48 students killed

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Some 2,000 students had gathered for yesterday morning's weekly assembly at the Government Technical Science College when the explosion blasted through the school hall, according to survivors.

"We were waiting for the principal to address us, around 7:30 am, when we heard a deafening sound and I was blown off my feet, people started screaming and running, I saw blood all over my body," 17-year-old student Musa Ibrahim Yahaya said from the general hospital, where he was being treated for head wounds.

Hospital records show 79 students were admitted and health workers said they include serious injuries that may require amputations. The hospital was so overcrowded that some patients were squashed two to a bed.

A morgue attendant said 48 bodies were brought to the hospital and all appeared to be between the ages of 11 and

20 years old. He spoke on condition of anonymity because he is not authorised to give information to reporters.

Survivors said the bomber appeared to have hidden the explosives in a type of rucksack popular with students. Months ago Nigeria's military had reported finding a bomb factory where explosives were being sewn into rucksacks in the northern city of Kano.

Garba Alhaji, father of one of the wounded students, said there was no proper security at the school. "I strongly blame the Yobe state government for not fencing the college," he said, adding that just three months ago a bomb was discovered in the school and removed by an anti-bomb squad.

Many Nigerians are angry that Boko Haram has increased attacks and bombings since the government on Oct 17 claimed to have brokered a cease-fire. Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau has denied negotiating a truce.

# Deal signed

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venture led by Korean Expressway Corporation will supervise construction of the main bridge and river training work.

China Major Bridge Engineering Construction Company in June got the main bridge construction work for Tk 12,133 crore. It will build the bridge in four years.

The Bridges Division has paid the company 15 percent of the amount as mobilisation advance. The bidder has already started the preparatory work.

The Bangladesh Army was awarded the job of supervising Jajira and Mawa approach roads and the service area with the assistance of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology last year.

The costs of the approach roads, service area and the supervision work amount to Tk 1,642 crore, of which the

army will receive around Tk 206 crore.

Construction of the Padma Bridge, a major electoral promise of the ruling Awami League, was delayed due to the World Bank's cancellation of its \$1.2 billion credit for the project in 2012 over allegations of a corruption conspiracy involving the Canadian company SNC Lavalin in appointing the supervision consultant.

The government later decided to construct the 6.15-km rail-and-road bridge with its own fund.

Though the bridge project expenses were estimated initially at Tk 20,507 crore, the costs have gone up to Tk 23,142 crore, according to Bridges Division officials.

Speaking at the signing ceremony yesterday, Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader assured of maintaining transparency at every stage of the construction.