

British aid worker killed in South Sudan

AFP, Juba

A British aid worker in war-torn South Sudan was shot dead late Tuesday in the capital Juba, the government said.

The Briton, who was working for the US aid organisation the Carter Center, was killed by a gunman who followed him into his compound in Juba, according to presidential spokesman Ateny Wek Ateny.

"It has been confirmed that a British staff member in the Carter Center was killed, a crime we condemn in the strongest terms possible," Ateny told AFP.

"He was driving in his car, and when he arrived at his gate he got out of the car, then while walking he was shot," he said, adding that "police have rounded up some people to get some clues."

In London, the Foreign Office confirmed that a British national had been killed.

'Shootouts'

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opened fire on them, forcing cops to fire retaliatory shots. At one stage, Bazlu and Sayeed were caught in the line of fire and got injured, claimed the ASP.

Law enforcers later sent the two to Manirampur Hospital where doctors declared them dead.

Including the two, 31 people were known to have been killed in "shoot-out" or "gunfight" with law enforcers across the country since the BNP-led 20-party alliance declared an indefinite countrywide blockade on January 5. Of them, 20 died in such incidents with police and 11 with Rab.

Fourteen of the victims were BNP and Jamaat-Shibir men. Law enforcers made accusations against some of them that they were involved in arson attacks.

'GUNFIGHT' IN LAXMIPUR

A Jubo Dal leader received bullets in a "gunfight" with Detective Branch of police in Palerhat of Laxmipur Sadar upazila early yesterday, reports our Noakhali correspondent.

Injured Nazrul Islam Jasim, 28, was the president of South Hamchhadi union unit Jubo Dal in the upazila.

A DB team launched a raid in Palerhat around 1:45am to arrest troublemakers on information that some followers of listed criminals Masum and Laden have gathered there to carry out subversive activities, said Zunayet Kawser, an ASP in Laxmipur.

Sensing presence of law enforcers, criminals opened fire on the DB men. The cops retaliated by firing shots. At one stage, the thugs fled the spot, leaving Jasim injured.

The Jubo Dal leader was receiving treatment at Laxmipur Sadar Hospital under custody.

Jasim said police picked him up at his house late on Tuesday night. Later they took him to Palerhat and shot in his right leg.

Foreign envoys

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Wilcock's residence in Dhaka, the envoys discussed how they could help Bangladesh resolve the ongoing stalemate in a peaceful way, according to diplomatic sources.

US Ambassador in Dhaka Marcia Stephens Bloom Bernicat and diplomats from Canada, European Union, Japan, Norway, France and Turkey, among others, were present.

The envoys agreed on waiting for a few more days and observe the political situation before they would decide on any move.

However, they all favoured a UN-led initiative to encourage the political parties to resolve their differences peacefully.

Meanwhile, the EU Ambassador hosted a dinner for a visiting European Parliament delegation at his residence. Diplomats of many countries attended the event.

Law enforcers

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His comments came in the wake of recent international media reports that Hizb-ut-Tahrir may become a more dangerous terrorist group than the Islamic State.

On tackling violence during the ongoing blockade enforced by the BNP-led 20-party alliance, the police boss said the law enforcement agencies had been directed to show zero tolerance and work with full commitment against criminals.

He said a temporary ban on plying of vehicles on highways after 9:00pm was imposed after a meeting with transport owners and other bodies concerned, but the owners could resume overnight operation if they wanted.

Around 54,000 vehicles ran across the country in the last 24 hours, he said.

Asked why on-duty traffic police are wearing bullet-proof jackets nowadays, the IGP said police put on the necessary uniform whenever needed.

Violence worries EU delegation

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International Bangladesh Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman said the EU team wanted to know how the political crisis could be resolved.

Responding to a question from a newsman, he said, "I don't think the delegation would put any pressure on the government to hold dialogue. Rather, they are thinking of finding out a solution [to the crisis]..."

The EU team also discussed how to overcome the crisis and their probable role in it, added Iftekharuzzaman.

"I told the meeting that cent percent people want dialogue, but there is no atmosphere for dialogue. It is the responsibility of the two major political parties' chiefs to create an atmosphere for holding talks. If they are cordial, the problem would surely be solved," he mentioned.

Issues including deterioration in

the rule of law, impact of political confrontation on public safety, security and human rights, economics, trade and investment were discussed in the meeting.

The potential rise of militancy and extremism, taking advantage of the use of violence as a means of realising political demands on one hand and the excessive use of force to control it on the other hand also came up for discussion, Iftekharuzzaman told The Daily Star.

Adilur Rahman Khan, secretary of rights body Odhikar; and representatives of Unicef and UN Women were present, among others.

MEETING WITH SHAHRIAR

Earlier in the day, the EU team had a meeting with State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam at his ministry office.

After the meeting, the minister said the EU delegation did not express any concern about the human rights situation in Bangladesh.

The EU members were informed that the law enforcers have been put on alert to maintain law and order, Shahriar told reporters.

Prime Minister's Political Affairs Adviser HT Imam and newly appointed EU Ambassador to Bangladesh Pierre Mayaudon were present.

Shahriar said the EU members were mainly concerned about the progress in implementing government's promises to improve the working conditions in the RMG sector following the Rana Plaza tragedy.

The team also visited a garment factory in the city yesterday and expressed satisfaction over improved working conditions there, he added.

Tigers shrug off Afghan jitters

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from the front to dominate the Afghans and stamp the Tigers' supremacy against the Associates.

A nervous start was followed by solid batting by the middle order as Shakib Al Hasan (63) and Mushfiquir Rahim's (71) efficient efforts gave Bangladesh a competitive total of 267, despite the late surge being dented by a steady fall of wickets. Mashrafe, who bowled his heart out, bowled a fiery opening spell, while Rubel aided him to script the comfortable victory.

The game was all but over when Mashrafe claimed two wickets and Rubel one to bring the Afghans to 3 for 3 in 3. It would not have been a surprise had Mashrafe scooped the player-of-the-match award ahead of Mushfiquir, as his destructive spell shattered any hopes the Afghans had of winning the match.

They failed to recover from the early hiccups and were bundled out for 162 against a disciplined bowling attack.

The Afghans made a promising start after Mashrafe had won the toss and elected to bat on a placid track. Shapoor Zadran, whose first spell read 3-1-4-0, bowled some fine overs and set the tone for other to follow.

Openers Tamim Iqbal and Anamul Haque cautiously started the innings with a 47-run stand, but their successive dismissals put the Tigers in a spot of bother. Young Soumya Sarker however showed lot of promise during his 25-ball 28 that steadied the ship, but once again, the wickets of Sarker and Mahmudullah Riyad put the Afghans on top.

Bangladesh were down four wickets at the end of the 30th over with a sluggish run-rate, but a 114-run partnership

between Shakib and Mushfiquir, who amassed the runs in 15.3 overs at a rate of 7.35, helped them to recover once more. Shakib hit 63 off 51 balls, smashing six fours and a six over backward square-leg while Mushfiquir, who still felt a lot of pain as he captained the Tigers to their Asia Cup loss against the same opponents, made 71 off 56 balls with six fours and a six to turn the match in favour of the Tigers.

Sabbir Rahman, who was preferred ahead of Nasir Hossain at number seven, failed to show his big hitting abilities as Bangladesh added just eight runs in 2.1 overs after Shakib's departure in the 45th over while Mushfiquir kept watching from the other end.

Bangladesh's easy victory was no surprise in the end but Mominul Haque's batting at number nine position was a real surprise for many.

Facebook

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The social network's plan seems to be to allow its users to share films that can then be viewed in virtual reality, according to comments to Re/Code at a media conference.

"I mean, virtual reality is pretty cool. We're working on apps for VR," Chris Cox, Facebook's chief product officer, said.

"When you're in Facebook, you're just sending around these bits of experience — a photo, a video, a thought," he said. Virtual reality will allow people to be "sending a fuller picture".

He cited example films that allowed users to feel as if they were inside a fighter jet or a Mongolian yurt.

If users have a similar experience, they might be able to share everything that is going on around them in an immersive way, rather than just uploading one photo.

The company hopes to allow everyone to be able to make and send the films — including normal users as well as Beyoncé, he said.

At the moment, virtual reality films require big camera rigs and lots of editing to make. But those in the industry hope that the technology to create the films as well as watch them will eventually become cheaper and easier to use.

Facebook has been pushing to become a central hub for videos — with uploads growing at a record pace and helping the site's plan to eventually compete with YouTube.

Cox said the videos probably won't come "for a while". But he implied that the developments were being held back by the availability of the headsets, rather than Facebook's work.

Star will face action

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by publishing its poster in the newspaper" recently.

"Publishing a poster of a banned organisation in a newspaper means helping publicise that banned outfit," the premier said in parliament, to the cheers of lawmakers from the ruling Awami League and the opposition Jatiya Party.

The Daily Star on February 11 published a snapshot of the poster under the headline "Fanatics raise their ugly heads again". The photo carried the caption: "Taking advantage of the current political crisis in the country accompanied by wanton violence, banned extremist Islamist organisation Hizb-ut-Tahrir published and pasted posters in the capital in an attempt to foment unrest within the armed forces. This poster was found pasted on a wall in an alleyway near Bangla Motor intersection in the capital yesterday."

Hasina said, "It's most unfortunate that The Daily Star ... gave a huge space to publish a poster,

pasted in a corner of Bangla Motor, of Hizb-ut Tahrir Perhaps none would have read that poster."

She was responding to a query of JP lawmaker Pir Fazlur Rahman on the government's steps to contain Hizb-ut Tahrir so that it could not emerge as a fearsome outfit like the Islamic State.

"Irrespective of whether [the paper] wrote it in a negative or a positive way, I think giving such a big coverage to the poster is tantamount to patronising Hizb-ut Tahrir," she told the House.

The prime minister said newspapers should not publish anything that might harm the country. "But I don't understand why they [The Daily Star] did this. However, we are taking appropriate measures against this, and actions will be taken against those who are trying to patronise Hizb-ut Tahrir by publishing its poster."

On February 15, a lawyer filed a case with the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court in Dhaka against The Daily Star Editor and Publisher

Mahfuz Anam, Chief News Editor Syed Ashfaqul Haque and Chief Photographer Sk Enamul Haq for publishing the photograph of the poster.

About containing Hizb-ut Tahrir, Hasina said: "As we took appropriate measures against them, they could not resort to any subversive acts since 2009."

The outfit would not have been able to re-emerge "if Khaleda Zia had not started subversive activities, burning people to death and destroying vehicles and everything else in the IS style," she went on.

The PM alleged that Khaleda patronises Hizb-ut Tahrir and there was no difference between the activities of Jamaat, BNP and Hizb-ut Tahrir.

"We will take all necessary measures to save the country from their hands," she asserted.

The premier directed the MPs to mobilise people in their constituencies to form resistance against militancy.

AL, BNP to reply

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to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, urging them to engage in constructive dialogue to peacefully resolve the current political crisis.

The ruling party believes it would have to promise fresh elections if it had to sit for dialogue with the BNP. "Going for early elections would definitely be suicidal for the party and thus there is no way to sit for dialogue," said a top AL policymaker.

AL presidium member Nuh-ul-Alam Lenin told The Daily Star there was no scope for talks with the BNP as the party had resorted to terrorist activities. "Will the UN hold talks with the terrorists who are killing people in Jordan and Syria?" he asked.

The BNP said the party was ready to sit for dialogue and hoped that the UN would initiate meaningful talks. But its leaders said that they would continue with their hartals and blockade until a dialogue started and the government committed itself to ending the political crisis.

BNP Chairperson's Adviser Osman Faruq, now in the US, yesterday told The Daily Star over the telephone, that BNP would welcome and cooperate with any UN initiative to end the crisis peacefully.

He said he was waiting to see the UN chief's next course of action.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam said the government was preparing to reply to the UN secretary general.

AL leaders said Hasina in her reply might describe the arson attacks, violence, and the killing of people, which started early last month.

BNP leaders said Khaleda would describe the "government's repression" and the "killing of its activists in crossfire", indiscriminate arrests of its activists and gagging of its voice.

Earlier, UN Deputy Spokesman for the Secretary General Farhan Haq told The Daily Star that the secretary general has recently sent letters to the two leaders and that UN secretary general's special envoy Oscar Taranco was acting on his behalf.

"He [Taranco] has been tasked by the secretary general to be in contact with the government and the opposition and he would continue with those efforts. But, at this point, like I said, there's no travel to announce," Farhan said on Tuesday in New York.

A BNP insider claimed that Taranco had called Khaleda Zia over the phone last week.

BAN'S LETTER

Ban in his letter regretted the violence that erupted during the ongoing blockade and hartals and resulted in many deaths and injuries of innocent citizens.

He requested the two leaders to cooperate with Taranco who has been tasked to be in contact with the government and the opposition.

Diplomatic sources said the UN chief requested the prime minister to hold dialogue with the opposition leader now outside the parliament.

In his letter to Khaleda, Ban stressed the need for ending the violence and solving the problems peacefully through dialogue.

The sources said Ban in his letters lauded Bangladesh's contribution to the UN peacekeeping missions and said the performance of Bangladeshi peacekeepers was exemplary.

The UN chief said Bangladesh has made significant progress in overcoming the challenges and has built a thriving economy and made important gains towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

He said the UN remains strongly committed to its partnership with Bangladesh in the common pursuit of peace, prosperity and respect for human rights. He also looks forward to deepening already close and constructive ties.

Ban had also written letters to Hasina and Khaleda in May and November of 2013 when the country saw violence over the last elections.

US Secretary of State John Kerry had also written to AL and BNP chiefs in September 2013 requesting them to hold constructive dialogue.

Teesta hope rises

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agreement could not be signed.

The Teesta river, which has its origin in Sikkim, flows through the northern part of West Bengal in India before entering Bangladesh and joining the Brahmaputra river.

"Certainly, the Teesta water-sharing issue will come up for discussion," said a diplomatic source in Dhaka, adding, "West Bengal is looking to build positive relations with a friendly neighbour Bangladesh."

Two issues -- finding an acceptable formula to share the Teesta waters and the ratification of a Land Boundary Agreement (LBA) -- have cast a shadow over bilateral ties between Bangladesh and India, although relations have been on the upswing since 2009 when Awami League assumed power.

Ahead of her arrival, Mamata Banerjee has expressed hope to reporters in Kolkata that her visit to Bangladesh would further strengthen ties between Bangladesh and her state and promote business between the two sides.

Mamata, invited by Bangladesh Foreign Minister AH Mahmood Ali on the occasion of "Bhasa Divas" on February 21, pitched for stronger trade and cultural linkages between Bangladesh and West Bengal.

"I will carry to Bangladesh the message of enhanced trade links and other exchanges between West Bengal and Bangladesh," she told reporters.

The West Bengal chief minister will lead a 39-member delegation with a business team, besides a cultural troupe, with the aim of increasing trade and investment between

West Bengal and Bangladesh, said sources at the foreign ministry and the Indian High Commission.

Mamata will be accompanied by Firdah Hakim, West Bengal Minister of Urban Development, Bratya Basu, West Bengal Minister of Tourism, Deepak Adhikari MP, Moonmoon Sen MP, Sanjay Mitra, chief secretary, and other senior officials, said the high commission sources.

As per the programme schedule, Mamata will arrive in Dhaka by an Air India flight at 9:00pm. Bangladesh State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam will receive her at the airport.

She will hold an interaction over lunch with eminent litterateurs and cultural personalities at Sonargaon Hotel tomorrow at 12:30pm. She will call on President Abdul Hamid at Bangabhaban at 4:00pm and then visit the Bangabandhu Memorial Museum.

In the evening, the chief minister will attend a reception hosted by the Indian high commissioner.

Mamata will place a wreath at the Central Shaheed Minar after the president and the prime minister. Later, she will call on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina likely at the Gano Bhaban on Saturday noon.

Mamata is expected to address a business event to be organised by the India-Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce, the Federation of Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Indian Chamber of Commerce.

She is also likely to attend high tea with Foreign Minister Mahmood Ali at State Guesthouse Jamuna and depart for Kolkata on Saturday at 10:00pm.

Target 9,000MW power

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import of 500 mmcf/d [one fifth of the country's current consumption] LNG from the Middle East.

"Handling coal would not pose as a major issue as there will be a deep-sea port in Matarbari," said Tawfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury, Bir Bikram, energy adviser to the prime minister.

"Coal is widely available in the international open market," he added.

Each 1,200-1,300MW coal-fired plant would require a daily supply of 11,000 tonnes of high quality coal to be imported from any of the sources -- Indonesia, South Africa, Australia and Mozambique.

The authorities have, meanwhile, warmed up coal power schemes in Maheshkhali.

The PDB has signed memorandums of understanding (MoUs) with Malaysia and China to install two power plants each with 1,320MW capacity.

In April last year, the PDB signed a MoU with Chinese company CHDHC and has finalised a joint venture agreement. In September, it signed a MoU with Malaysian Tenaga and now preparing for conducting a feasibility study.

Besides, the PDB is framing MoUs with Korean company Kepko and a Singaporean company for two separate power plants.

The North West Power Generation Company has also signed a MoU with Chinese company CMC last year and has appointed a consultant to conduct a feasibility study for its 1,320MW coal-fired power project.