

ROAD BLOCK ATTEMPT 2 Shibir, Jubo Dal men hurt in cop firing

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali
A Jubo Dal and a Shibir activist received bullets as police opened fire on alleged blockaders in Kamalnagar upazila of Laxmipur early yesterday. Injured Md Arif Hossain, 28, of Char Kalkini union and Md Main Uddin, 30, of Char Jangalia village were undergoing treatment at Laxmipur Sadar Hospital. Kabir Ahmed, officer-in-charge of the police station, however, said a police team was patrolling the Ramgati-Laxmipur road around 1:00am when Jubo Dal and Shibir men blocked the road in Beragej by felling trees there. Sensing the presence of law enforcers, they hurled firebombs at the cops. Police retaliated with gun shots, leaving the two wounded, he added. However, Jubo Dal activist Arif and Islami Chhatra Shibir activist Main Uddin claimed that police picked them up on Sunday afternoon when they were working on agricultural land.



Indian Foreign Secretary Subramanyam Jaishankar hands Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina a letter from Indian PM Narendra Modi at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban yesterday.

PHOTO: PMO

Modi 'eagerly waiting' to visit Dhaka

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This is Modi's second letter to Hasina since coming to power. He first wrote to the Bangladesh PM on June 26, 2014, when he accepted Hasina's invitation to visit Dhaka. In that letter, Modi also invited Hasina to visit India at her earliest convenience. Meanwhile, Dhaka sees "a major change" in Indian foreign policy that New Delhi is focused on resolving bilateral problems and pending issues "expeditiously" with its next door neighbours. "One thing became clear that they want to solve problems. They want to strengthen relations with regional countries and solve it quickly if there is any problem," Foreign Secretary Md Shahidul Haque said adding, "We see it a major change in Indian foreign policy." Haque came up with this observation yesterday after his first bilateral talks with his new Indian counterpart Subramanyam Jaishankar. "The key message is to have a deeper friendship. We want cooperation, they also want cooperation on overall issues," the foreign secretary told reporters at a press briefing on the outcome of the visit. Bangladeshi and Indian diplomats said Jaishankar had "very successful

and constructive" meetings with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Foreign Minister AH Mahmood Ali and Foreign Secretary Shahidul Haque. Modi has asked Jaishankar to go on a goodwill visit to all Saarc countries to give his neighbourhood outreach a push, a month after he replaced Sujatha Singh with Jaishankar. Highly placed sources said India's top diplomat also conveyed the message to the Bangladeshi leadership about Prime Minister Narendra Modi's initiative to move ahead with sub-regional approach for development as the Saarc nations collectively failed to deliver on development agenda. They said Jaishankar told Dhaka that it was last year's Saarc Summit in Kathmandu that prompted India to push ahead with the sub-regional connectivity arrangements with Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal to ensure easier transit for passenger, personal and cargo vehicles among the four Saarc nations. Sources at the meetings told The Daily Star that the officials of the two countries discussed sub-regional cooperation on water, power, and connectivity and transit as well as power trade issues. Dhaka, Thimpu, New Delhi and Kathmandu are currently going ahead with several initiatives in these sectors.

Asked about sub-regional cooperation, Foreign Secretary Haque said there are two initiatives in this regard -- one is water resources and power, and connectivity and transport. The next meeting on sub-regional cooperation will be held in Dhaka in the second half of the current year. Haque told reporters they had focused on three major areas -- bilateral relations, sub-regional and regional, and international relations -- during the 'brief' bilateral talks with his Indian counterpart. He said they discussed all issues including the LBA and Teesta, "but nothing specific" during the 40-minute bilateral meetings. "Of course we raised our concern on Teesta and conveyed Bangladesh's concern about it," he said replying to a question adding "Their feedback was positive." He said they discussed Saarc (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) and Bimstec (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) issues to know how these forums can work better. "We also discussed about the weakness of Saarc and how to overcome the problems," the foreign secretary added. The secretary-to-secretary bilateral

meeting had to be cut short as Jaishankar's arrival was delayed in the morning due to heavy snow at Paro, Bhutan. Jaishankar will leave Dhaka for Islamabad this morning. The foreign secretary said India will remove all the trade barriers and will soon give their feedback on the list of para-tariff barriers given to the Indian side. Responding to another question, Haque said political issues were not discussed at the meeting. When his attention was drawn to media reports that Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Dhaka in March, the foreign secretary said, "I'm not aware of any specific date. But he wants to visit as soon as possible." Meanwhile, after his meeting with the foreign minister, Jaishankar told reporters that he had a very successful and constructive meeting and they wanted more cooperation from India. Earlier emerging from meeting with the foreign secretary, Jaishankar said he discussed a wide range of issues. "We had a very good discussion," he told reporters. Asked whether they discussed Teesta issues at the meeting, the Indian Foreign Secretary parried the question saying, "That's all I would like to say at this time."

Syrian, Kurdish forces battle IS in border area

AFP, Beirut
Syrian regime forces and Kurdish militia fought separate battles with the Islamic State group yesterday in a strategic area near the Iraqi and Turkish borders, a monitoring group said. Forces loyal to President Bashar al-Assad and fighters from the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) launched uncoordinated offensives against IS in the northeastern province of Hasakeh, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said. Observatory head Rami Abdel Rahman told AFP that after three days of clashes, regime forces bolstered by fighters from Arab tribes had secured control over 23 villages in the centre of the province from IS. Syrian state news agency SANA put the number at 31. "IS has launched counter-attacks on regime checkpoints, while the regime fortifies its positions with support from local Arab tribes," Abdel Rahman added.

EKRAM MURDER Key accused gets bail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
The High Court yesterday granted permanent bail to Mahtab Uddin Chowdhury Minar, the prime accused in Fulgazi upazila chairman Ekramul Haque killing case, clearing the way for his release from jail. The court delivered the judgment after hearing a petition filed by Minar seeking bail in the case. Ekramul Haque, 45, also the president of the upazila unit of Awami League, was shot and burnt to death in his car in the Academy area in Fen town on May 20 last year. Rezaul Haque Jasim, brother of the slain upazila chairman, filed a murder case with Feni Model Police Station the same day, accusing Mahtab and 30 to 35 unnamed people. A team of Detective Branch (DB) of police had arrested Mahtab, the lone named accused in the case, from a house in Kachukhet area near Dhaka Cantonment in the capital on May 27 last year. Attorney General Mahbubey Alam told this correspondent that his office would move an appeal before the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court for staying the HC verdict that granted bail to Minar. Contacted, Minar's lawyer ZI Khan Panna said the HC court granted bail to Minar since the allegation brought against him in Ekramul murder case was not proved. He said there was no legal bar to his client's release from jail following the HC verdict.

Samsung unveils S6

BBC ONLINE
Samsung will sell two versions of its next flagship phone, one of which has a screen that curves round its sides. The Galaxy S6 Edge uses the feature to provide a quick way to stay in touch with select contacts, and to alert owners to important information. It will be sold for a higher price than the standard S6, which otherwise has the same specifications. Samsung lost market share to Apple and others after the S5 sold fewer copies than its predecessor in many countries.



Its replacements were unveiled in Barcelona, ahead of the start of Mobile World Congress. They go on sale on 10 April in 20 countries, including the UK. METAL FRAME The South Korean firm said it had set out to address past "missteps", and had codenamed the devices "project zero" to reflect the need for a rethink. Changes include making the TouchWiz user interface simpler to use by cutting the number of pop-up messages and introducing a metal frame and glass back instead of the plastic styling of earlier models. The redesign has, however, meant some features have had to be jettisoned: the phones are not water-resistant, they do not have a microSD slot for extra storage and their backs cannot be removed to change their batteries. Even so, one expert praised the company's choices. "Samsung has clearly listened to feedback - not just for the Galaxy S5, which just missed the mark last year costing the company greatly - but also the S4, which was a product that tried to cram in every piece of technology it could find," said Ben Wood, head of research at the CCS Insight tech consultancy. "The software has been made into a much more crisp and clear experience, the design of the product has clean lines and looks very nice, and the marketing campaign is expected to only pinpoint three things - and that's certainly something that had been missing from Samsung's products for quite some time." Others were more critical. Rob Kerr, from the price comparison site uswitch.com, declared: "The dual-curved display just seems too gimmicky, too niche, to really be a crowd pleaser." The three topics Samsung is focusing on are: Revamped designs, including the premium model's curved screen; camera upgrades In-built support for wireless charging, with support for two rival standards The S6 Edge uses its curves to provide a couple of services. The first is called People Edge, which provides a quick way to bring up calls, texts and other messages from five acquaintances of the owner's choosing.

Face of a hate

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A student of physics in Chittagong University, law enforcers and campus sources said. The 29-year-old might have been covertly involved in militant activities even before that, they added. Farabi was first arrested in 2010 for vandalism on the university campus in August that year. Having walked out of prison a month later, he started writing on blogs and social media platforms about Islam and how it should be practised. His blog became an open hub for sharing of fanatical thoughts as he began to counter free-thinking bloggers, including Avijit. His blog and several Facebook accounts show a large following, mostly radical in their thinking. Police detained him for a second time from Chittagong University campus in February 2013 for threatening to kill the imam who would administer the funeral prayers of young blogger-architect Ahmed Rajib Haider, who was killed allegedly by militants in the capital's Mirpur that year.

A Dhaka court framed charges against him in this case in June 2013. The charges carry maximum 14 years in jail and a fine of Tk 1 crore. During his time in Kashimpur jail in this case, Farabi became "very close" with Ansarullah Bangla Team's spiritual guru Jasimuddin Rahmania and his aides, intelligence sources said. This militant outfit was found to be involved in Rajib's murder, and Jasimuddin and six North South University students linked to this group were put in jail. Farabi came out of prison on High Court bail in August 2013, only to step up his activities, publicly threatening to kill different people, including Avijit. On August 21 that year, he took to the Facebook to demand the release of the North South University students who confessed their involvement in the killing of Rajib. In one post soon after his release, he wrote: "To me atheists are nothing but insects, and it is best for insects to die."

Law enforcers say they are aware of Farabi's death threats and provocative activities online, but it remains a mystery why he was not arrested for those. Farabi would identify and develop relations with progressive bloggers and ask their phone numbers so they could discuss their faiths. This way he came in contact with many and learnt their details, according to online activists. Detectives believe he has a strong link with Jasimuddin and his Ansarullah Bangla Team, although they are not sure who his mentor is or which group he is currently involved with. Born in 1986 in Kalaisri Para of Brahmanbaria, Farabi got admitted to CU in the academic session 2005-06 but is yet to complete his education as he failed his fourth-year exam several times, campus sources said. In his early life, he went to Railway Govt Primary School in Kishoreganj and to Kendua Joyhori Sky Govt High School. He did his HSC from Notre Dame College in Dhaka in 2005.

Key suspect arrested

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Thursday night's attack and asked, "Have you got the pictures?" He replied he got those. As the friend wanted to know his reaction, he said he would be arrested anytime soon. "Such matters suggest Farabi was directly linked to the killing," said the Rab statement. Meanwhile, the Rapid Action Battalion marked five persons in video clips of close-circuit cameras installed in Dhaka University area for Amar Ekushey Book Fair. One of them was seen pointing to Avijit. Their identities, however, could not be known yet as the images were not clear, Mufti said. Yesterday, family members, who met Bonya at the Square Hospital, said she was improving. Despite her serious injuries, she remains adamant that she will do whatever it takes to get justice for the killing of her husband. Being an American citizen, she will contact US investigators for tracking down the killers, they quoted her as saying. The Rab also said in a statement that a Facebook friend sent Farabi a photo of bloodied Avijit after

Thursday night's attack and asked, "Have you got the pictures?" He replied he got those. As the friend wanted to know his reaction, he said he would be arrested anytime soon. "Such matters suggest Farabi was directly linked to the killing," said the Rab statement. Meanwhile, the Rapid Action Battalion marked five persons in video clips of close-circuit cameras installed in Dhaka University area for Amar Ekushey Book Fair. One of them was seen pointing to Avijit. Their identities, however, could not be known yet as the images were not clear, Mufti said. Yesterday, family members, who met Bonya at the Square Hospital, said she was improving. Despite her serious injuries, she remains adamant that she will do whatever it takes to get justice for the killing of her husband. Being an American citizen, she will contact US investigators for tracking down the killers, they quoted her as saying. The Rab also said in a statement that a Facebook friend sent Farabi a photo of bloodied Avijit after

HC questions legality

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declared illegal and contrary to the constitution. The court also asked the government why all the electronic and print media outlets should not be directed to refrain from publishing news related to the calling of hartal and blockade as they incite incidents of violence, resulting in infringement of fundamental rights. The business bodies filed the petition on Sunday seeking necessary orders from the HC on the government to impose reasonable restrictions on hartals and blockade in an attempt to save businesses from financial loss. It ordered the government to reply why it would not be directed to withhold inclusion of names of victim members of different business bodies in the list of Credit Information Bureau (CIB), which monitors the financial transaction of individuals and companies, and also why the interest against their loans at different banks should not be waived for a reasonable period.

The petitioners are-- Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI), Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), Bangladesh Textiles Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BTMEA), and Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BKMEA). The HC asked the government to explain why it should not be ordered to reschedule the loans of victim members under different business bodies for no less than 12 years and to compensate them for their losses suffered from January 6 till now. It ordered the respondents to answer why the political parties calling hartal or blockade should not be declared liable for the damages to life and property done by their supporters. Secretaries to the ministries of home, law, finance, labour, industries, commerce and information, governor of Bangladesh Bank and secretaries general of 41 political parties registered with the Election Commission have been made

respondents to the rule, petitioners' lawyer Imtiaz Moinul Islam told The Daily Star. The HC bench of Justice Quazi Reza-Ul Hoque and Justice Abu Taher Md Saifur Rahman issued the rule after hearing the writ petition. Earlier on February 15, the same court following a writ petition had ordered the government to take all necessary steps to prevent the deadly blockade and hartals. It had also issued a rule upon the government and the leaders of the BNP led 20-party alliance, including BNP chief Khaleda Zia, to explain in four weeks why blockades and hartals, which are detrimental to education, people's lives and properties, should not be declared illegal and unconstitutional. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina told parliament on February 25 that the country had incurred a loss of over Tk 1,20,000 crore in the first 52 days of the BNP-Jamaat's blockade. The BNP-led 20-party alliance has enforced a countrywide blockade since January 6.

Khaleda may not appear

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Earlier, Awami League men had attacked her motorcade on her way to the court. How will she go to the court as there is no security there? Khaleda's panel lawyer advocate Sanaullah Mia told UNB. On February 25, the court issued warrants for the arrest of Khaleda and two other accused in the graft cases. Judge Abu Ahmed Jamadar of Special Judge's Court-3 also fixed March 4 for the next hearing in the cases. The court has been set up in the playground of Govt Alia Madrasa in the capital's Bakshibazar. Another Dhaka court on Sunday issued a warrant for the search of BNP chairperson's Gulshan office in a case filed under the explosive substances act. BNP sources said Khaleda Zia was unwilling to leave her office as she has information that the government would either arrest her in the two cases or won't allow her entering the office again. Wishing anonymity, a leader close to the BNP chief said Khaleda has already directed top leaders of her party to continue the ongoing move-

ment even if she is arrested. He said the BNP chief in consultation with her son and BNP Senior Vice-chairman Tarique Rahman and her party's senior leaders made a plan as to how the movement and party would be run if she is put behind bars. Khaleda's another counsel Khandaker Mahbub Hossain said they have filed a petition with the High Court for changing the judge of the special court as their client has no confidence in him. He said the HC has fixed March 5 for hearing on the petition. The lower court, said Mahbub, should not proceed with the trial in the two cases until the HC disposes of the petition. 9 officials FROM PAGE 1 Meanwhile, Shyamol Kanti Ghosh, acting member of the Privatisation Commission, and Maksudul Hasan Khan, acting secretary to the Anti-Corruption Commission, have been made secretaries and attached to the public administration ministry.