

Avijit's wife lashes out at govt

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 Hiding since Islamic militants wielding machetes attacked her on February 26 in her native Bangladesh.

During the assault, her husband -- the Bangladeshi-American secular activist and blogger Avijit Roy -- was hacked to death. Bonya sustained four head wounds, and her left thumb was sliced off.

On May 3, the Indian-born head of al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent reportedly claimed responsibility for the attacks on Avijit and others in Bangladesh and Pakistan.

In her first extensive interview since the attack, Bonya criticised the Bangladeshi government for not responding more aggressively to her husband's slaying.

"This was well planned, choreographed -- a global act of terrorism," she said. "But what almost bothers me more is that no one from the Bangladesh government has reached out to me. It's as if I don't exist, and they are afraid of the extremists. Is Bangladesh going to be the next Pakistan or Afghanistan?"

'WALKING A FINE LINE'
 In an interview, Sajeb Wazed Joy, the son of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, said his mother offered private condolences to Roy's father. But the political situation in Bangladesh is too volatile for her to comment publicly, he said. Avijit was an avowed atheist; the book he was promoting when he was killed is titled "The Virus of Faith."

"We are walking a fine line here," said Joy, also the prime minister's ICT affairs adviser. "We don't want to be seen as atheists. It doesn't change our core beliefs. We believe in secularism," he said. "But given that our opposition party plays that religion card against us relentlessly, we can't come out strongly

for him. It's about perception, not about reality."

A spokesman at the Bangladesh embassy in Washington said he did not know why no one from his government had yet to contact Bonya, who, like her late husband, is a dual Bangladeshi-US citizen.

Joy said Avijit's death came during a three-month period when 160 people died in bus bombings in Dhaka, and shortly before explosions near the prime minister's motorcade. Joy blamed political opponents who, he said, seek to destabilize his mother's government.

"To us, Avijit Roy is no different than the 160 others that have been killed," he said. "We want to bring all the killers to justice. I understand why [his wife] is upset. My mother has been targeted by these same fundamentalists."

FREE THINKER
 Well known in his native Bangladesh, Avijit was largely anonymous in his suburban Atlanta neighbourhood, where the couple lived since 2006.

By day, he worked as a Verizon software engineer. At night, he was a prolific writer, emerging as a leading critic of religious extremism in Bangladesh.

To some, he was a provocative atheist, but his blog also reflected a strong belief in the value of civil debate, said his stepdaughter, Trisha Ahmed, 18.

A THREAT
 In 2002, while in Singapore, Avijit noticed a blog post from a US woman who wrote of religion. "I don't understand how people can believe in fairy tales." It was Bonya, who would become his wife.

"A lot of people attacked me online for that post," she recalled. "I was a tech manager in Atlanta at the time, a single mom. I was intimidated and

didn't respond. The next day, someone named Avijit Roy is defending me."

They dated long distance for years, and he reluctantly moved from Singapore to Atlanta in 2006: Bonya would not leave the United States until her daughter completed high school. Avijit held a doctorate in biomedical research, but found it easier to get a lucrative job and a US visa as a software architect, his wife said.

After Trisha Ahmed was in college, the couple, by then married and US citizens, decided to visit Dhaka. The two departed in mid-February.

"We knew that anything can happen in a country like that, and we took precautions," Ahmed said. "There was only one threat against him but we didn't take it seriously. Otherwise, we wouldn't have gone."

SSC results

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 available on the website "http://www.educationboardresults.gov.bd".

Officials of the ministry said examinees would get their results from their respective centres, websites and boards and through SMS on registered mobile phones from 2:00pm.

Around 14.79 lakh students under the 10 education boards appeared for this year's SSC and equivalent exams. The exams began on February 6 instead of February 2 due to the countrywide indefinite blockade and intermittent hartals by the BNP-led 20-party alliance.

The authorities arranged for examinations on weekends -- Friday and Saturday -- because of the hartal.

The theoretical exams were initially scheduled to end on March 10 but it finally concluded on April 3.

Major hospital

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 notice the expiry of the extinguishers. No one of the authorities concerned wants to shoulder the responsibility. The office of the director and the engineering department traded blame.

"It's the responsibility of the director to look into the matter. If the director issues a letter, we buy, install and refill the extinguishers," said BSMMU Chief Engineer Srikanta Roy.

On the other side, Director Brig Gen (ret'd) Abdul Majid Bhuiyan said, "They [the engineering department] are wrong. It's their job as they oversee maintenance of those devices."

Asked if it is a case of serious neglect by the authorities concerned not to pay proper attention to fire safety, Bhuiyan said, "Definitely it is neglect of [someone's] duties and responsibilities."

About fire training, the director claimed to have trained 60 staff members to use the extinguishers.

However, doctors and officials concerned said the university had no such trained staff.

During visits to 17-storey D Block,

10-storey C Block and six-storey B Block, it was found that fire extinguishers were out of date on each floor of those blocks. The C and D blocks accommodate most of the patients at the BSMMU hospital.

The 1,520-bed hospital roughly accommodates 1,200 to 1,300 patients and provides treatment to several thousand outdoor patients. A large number of attendants also stay at the hospital, while around 4,500 doctors, nurses, and other staff members work there.

Even the fire exhausters in front of C Block's Intensive Care Unit (ICU), D Block's Coronary Care Unit (CCU), C Block's Neonatology ICU, operation theatres of surgery, neurosurgery, caesarean OT and labour room, obstetrics and gynaecology, ophthalmology, ENT and neck surgery are beyond their expiry date.

The two fire extinguishers installed in front of the hospital director's room are older than others in the building except the damaged ones. Installed on January 19, 2011, these two devices

expired on January 18, 2013.

The director has been unaware of the issue.

Recently, a small fire broke out on a floor of A Block that created huge panic among doctors and patients.

"We always worry how we will deal with the situation in case of a fire. We have informed our higher authorities repeatedly, but in vain," said a ward boy of neurosurgery ward asking not to be named.

"None should avoid responsibility as it involves lives of hundreds of people," said Assistant Proctor of BSMMU Prof Atiqur Rahman.

He added the hospital needed trained personnel to deal with fire.

Treasurer of the university Prof Zulfikar Rahman Khan said there must have been neglect on the part of the authorities. He pointed finger at the hospital administration in this regard.

When The Daily Star drew his attention to the issue, newly appointed BSMMU Vice-Chancellor Prof Kamrul Islam said, "I am going to take necessary measures soon."

Link to 2nd submarine

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 amount for the project, the government will provide Tk 166 core and the BSCCL Tk 142.64 core.

Once the country gets its second connection, it will obtain bandwidth of more than 1,300 gigabits per second (Gbps) in addition to 200 Gbps bandwidth from the existing SEA-ME-WE-4 connection, BSCCL Managing Director Monwar Hossain told this correspondent citing a BSCCL calculation.

The country got its first submarine cable connection -- SEA-ME-WE-4 -- in 2006.

The BSCCL signed a deal with SEA-ME-WE-5, a 14-nation consortium, in March last year to get a second connection, and got approval from the cabinet committee on economic affairs in April this year.

"The project is underway but we need the government's approval for getting the loan from the IDB," said Monwar.

The second connection would allow Bangladesh to stay online always and start full-fledged international bandwidth trade, he said.

"We need redundancy and this cable can ensure redundancy for us,"

he added.

According to project documents, if there is a cut in the existing submarine cable line, it needs seven to 10 days for repair. This means Bangladesh needs redundancy from another connection.

"SEA-ME-WE-4 already passed more than half of its lifespan and we need to connect with another cable before 2025," said Monwar.

At present, India has eight connections, Pakistan four and Sri Lanka three.

BSCCL Officials said the second submarine cable installation is likely to be completed by next year, and the landing station in Bangladesh will be at Kuakata in Patuakhali.

Half of the work at Kuakata has already been completed, they added.

According to the project proposal, the country requires a big volume of bandwidth with high speed following the launch of 3G data services. Subscribers are waiting for 4G and LTE (Long-Term Evolution) services that also need more bandwidth. It is now essential for Bangladesh to get connected with SEA-ME-WE-5.

The \$44 million loan to be taken

from the IDB will be payable in 10 years with a three-year grace period. The interest rate on the loan would be 4.15 percent, read the documents.

On top of that, there will be a service charge of 2.8 percent to be paid in 26 instalments.

Earlier, the IDB gave Bangladesh a loan when the country got connected with SEA-ME-WE-4 at a cost of \$35.2 million in 2006. The loan was paid back in 18 instalments.

Sources said 17 companies from 14 countries have joined SEA-ME-WE-5 to get connected with the 20,000km cable line from Singapore to France.

Initially, the lifespan of the cable is set at 20 years but it could be extended by five years.

Apart from the BSCCL, the 16 other companies that joined the consortium include the Singapore Telecommunications (SingTel), China Mobile, China Telecommunications, Emirates Integrated Telecommunications Company, Orange, PT Telekomunikasi Indonesia, Saudi Telecom Company, Telekom Malaysia and several companies from Sri Lanka, Thailand and India.

Cameron unveils

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 positions, after Cameron promised that a third of his cabinet would be made up of women.

Cameron also held talks with Conservative backbenchers amid concern that right-wingers in his party could play a disruptive role for the government, particularly over Britain's EU membership.

The British leader was expected to tell the influential 1922 Committee of backbenchers that his new five-year term would be about renewal, compared to a first term focused on "repair and recovery" to get the country out of a painful recession.

"It will be our task to renew a sense of fairness in our society -- where those who work hard and do the right thing are able to get on," Cameron was expected to tell the MPs, British newspapers reported.

The Conservatives won 331 out of the 650 seats in the House of Commons in Thursday's election, which gave Labour 232, the pro-independence Scottish National Party 56 and the Liberal Democrats just eight.

With the exception of nationalists in Scotland, the election left Britain's opposition in disarray, following Friday's resignations of Labour leader Ed Miliband and Liberal Democrat chief Nick Clegg.

The Labour party is split between centrists and leftists and was due to hold initial talks yesterday on finding a new leader ahead of a formal meeting tomorrow of its national executive committee.

The SNP lawmakers meanwhile arrived for their first day in parliament accompanied by the party's leader Nicola Sturgeon, who has called for sweeping new autonomous powers for Scotland that would go much further than any past promises of devolution.

Sturgeon, who as Scotland's first minister did not stand for parliament herself, has said that after SNP gains "it simply cannot be and it will not be business as usual when it comes to Westminster's dealing with Scotland".

MPs will be formally sworn in next Monday and Queen Elizabeth II will deliver her traditional speech at the State Opening of parliament on May 27, which will outline the Conservatives' legislative proposals.

Cameron has promised to hold an EU membership referendum by the end of 2017 and to eliminate Britain's budget deficit of some £90 billion (125 billion euros, \$139 billion) by 2018-2019.

Handshake

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 who may be located thousands of miles apart communicate through a robot, shaking hands with the machine and communicating the physical act still encouraged co-operation and mutual understanding.

The findings could provoke a revolution in the art of conducting a videoconference or Skype interview.

Researchers at the University of Bath set up mock house-sale negotiations using Nao, a 23in-tall humanoid robot designed to accompany people around the property. A total of 120 human participants were involved, and each was randomly assigned the role of buyer or seller.

One person was present in the meeting with Nao, while the other took part in the meeting remotely through the robot's built-in head camera and microphone.

Sensors in the robot's hand transmitted a signal when it was grasped, making a controller in the distant person's hand vibrate at the same time.

The researchers varied the experiment with negotiations conducted either with no handshake at the beginning, or with handshakes with and without vibration to the remote person. Results showed that the act of shaking hands was as important when people interacted virtually through the robot as when people negotiate face to face.

PM for smooth transfer

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 father Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman been alive, the deal would have been implemented much earlier.

People of the enclaves have been passing their days in hardship for decades, said Hasina. "They have already spent most of their lifetime very miserably. Now it's our duty to support their overall development."

She said the authorities concerned have been directed to build roads, schools, hospitals and houses for the homeless, and to ensure healthcare, drinking water and income-generating activities for the enclave people.

The PM asked the district administrations, law enforcement agencies, border guards and AL leaders to visit the enclaves to be taken from Indian possession and keep in touch with the people to resolve their problems.

The LBA has increased the government's responsibility for the welfare of the people, which should be rightly borne by the government, she mentioned, adding that proper execution of the deal was important to boost ties with India.

District administrations of Thakurgaon, Kishoreganj, Gaibandha and Jamalpur and divisional commissioners of Dhaka and Rangpur were also connected through the videoconference.

CABINET MEETING
 Speaking at the cabinet meeting, the PM hoped propaganda about the LBA would come to an end with the passage

of the bill by Indian parliament.

"I had to hear many unpleasant remarks about the Land Boundary Agreement as my father Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had signed it," she told her cabinet colleagues.

"But as the daughter of Bangabandhu, today I am happy and satisfied with the start of the implementation of the deal," a minister told The Daily Star quoting the PM as saying.

Blasting BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, a minister told the meeting that Khaleda praised the Indian government for passing the LBA bill, but not the Bangladesh government. Hasina in reply said Khaleda and her party leaders used to term the LBA a "subservient agreement" and so they couldn't thank the AL government.

Describing the passage of the LBA bill as a big diplomatic achievement for Bangladesh, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shariar Alam praised the PM for her success and placed a thanks-giving motion before the cabinet.

The meeting unanimously accepted the proposal.

The PM said apart from negotiating its own interests with India, Bangladesh has taken forward the four-nation motor vehicle agreement which also involves India, Nepal and Bhutan.

Some cabinet members suggested that the government send a high level delegation to India to thank the Narendra Modi government.

DMP to probe

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 what security measures were taken by Ramna Division to tackle the situation.

The release describes the police's high-handed response to the demonstration as "lawful".

The police headquarters, however, will investigate the on-duty cops' excesses that left 34 protesters wounded and saw several female activists brutally assaulted with batons and boots. It yesterday formed a committee for that.

About a hundred activists of Chhatra Union came under police attack near Officers Club on Shaheed Captain Mansur Ali Sarani as they tried to lay siege to the DMP headquarters in Ramna on Sunday. They were protesting at police failure to arrest those responsible for the sexual assaults on women during Pahela Baishakh celebrations on the Dhaka University campus.

The DMP asked the committee to submit its report in seven working days.

Meanwhile, Nayek Anisur Rahman has been suspended for "misbehaving" with a female activist during the incident, said SM Jahangir Alam Sarker, acting deputy commissioner (Media) of DMP.

Anis's suspension came after newspapers published photographs showing that a policeman grabbed a female protester by the neck and pushed her. Another cop was seen kicking her.


The incident triggered outrage with condemnation pouring in from rights bodies and different socio-political organisations.

Termining the brutality "heinous", they demanded the government ensure exemplary punishment to those responsible for the excesses through a proper investigation into the incident.

Anti-corruption watchdog Transparency International, Bangladesh, in a statement, said the brutality and gender insensitive behaviour by a section of police on a peaceful protest showed that the police force is being used continuously as "political hermaphrodite".

In another statement, rights body Ain O Salish Kendra demanded the perpetrators be brought to book through a fair probe.

"Such police attack and torture on the demonstrators are direct violation of the protection guaranteed in the constitution," reads the statement.




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