



A land leveller is at work on Janjira approach road to the Padma bridge. Right, construction of the Mawa approach road is in progress. The photos were taken yesterday.



PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

## Muggers stab 2 Indian nationals

Snatch Tk 50,000, mobile phone

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Chittagong

Muggers stabbed two Indian nationals and snatched Tk 50,000 and a mobile phone from them in Sitakunda of Chittagong Monday night.

Injured Bhupindor Singh, 68, and Mul Chand Singh, 63, were given first aid at a local hospital, said Iftekhar Hasan, officer-in-charge of Sitakunda Police Station.

Later, they were sent to Dhaka with police escort, he added.

Law enforcers detained two people for their alleged involvement in the incident, said Iftekhar. He, however, declined to disclose their identities.

Police said a group of Indians of the Sikh community were returning to Dhaka in four minibuses after visiting a temple in Chittagong.

But the driver of one of the vehicles, which was carrying Bhupindor, Mul Chand and seven others of the group, stopped the vehicle at Panthichhila area in Sitakunda around 11:30pm as the vehicle's bumper got damaged, said Tariqul Islam, senior assistant superintendent of police of Sitakunda Model Police Station, quoting the microbus driver. "Suddenly 10-12 masked men swooped on them with machetes and sticks and took Tk 50,000 and a mobile phone from them," the police official said.

As Bhupindor and Mul Chand tried to resist them, they hacked the duo and fled the scene, he added. Bhupindor and Mul Chand suffered injuries in the left hand and the right leg respectively, Tariqul told The Daily Star.

As soon as the attackers fled the scene, the driver drove the microbus towards Mirsarai, and came across a police patrol team on the way. Police took them to a local hospital, said OC Iftekhar.

After that, they were sent to Dhaka with police escort, he added.

Contacted, Chittagong Additional Superintendent of Police (north zone) Mustafizur Rahman said that the incident seemed to be a case of robbery.

He said the group came to Chittagong from Dhaka Monday afternoon and visited a temple in Chawk Bazar in the port city around 2:30pm and then started for Dhaka around 10:30pm.

"They did not inform us about their visit," Mustafizur said, adding, "Had they informed us, we would have given them police protection."

The microbus driver, Ashim Kumar Malakar of Kushtia, filed a case with the police station in this connection, he added.

## 99 Myanmar fishermen detained

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Cg

Bangladesh Navy yesterday detained 99 fishermen of Myanmar near Saint Martin's Island inside Bangladesh territory.

Sources said the Myanmar nationals were fishing illegally in the Bay of Bengal with 12 trawlers.

Bangladesh Navy's ship Dhaleshwari conducted a drive around 8:00am and detained them.

The trawlers and the detainees were being taken to the Teknaf coast.

Those would be handed over to Teknaf Police Station today, said navy sources.

## Now rebel-backer

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If all these measures fail, disciplinary actions would be taken against the dissenters, the AL leaders agreed.

One of the areas where the ruling party is facing the double blow is Raozan municipality in Chittagong.

Debashish Palit got the party ticket but local lawmaker ABM Fazley Karim Chowdhury is backing rebel candidate Saiful Islam Rana, son of upazila AL President Shafiqul Islam Baby who is known as being loyal to the MP.

Similarly, in Dewanganj municipality under Jamalpur district, local MP Abul Kalam Azad is working for rebel aspirant and incumbent mayor Nurunnabi Apu instead of AL favourite Shahnewaj Sahenshah.

In Jaldhaka municipality of Nilphamari, rebel contender Ilias Hossain Bablu, also the incumbent mayor, is getting the support of local lawmaker Golam Mostofa. Abdul Wahed Bahadur has got the AL ticket to vie for the mayor post.

AL-backed candidate Munshi Nasir Uddin in Jibannagar municipality of Chuadanga too is in a tight spot as local MP Ali Asgar is backing rebel contender Jahangir Alam.

In Kalkini municipality of Madaripur, Enayet Hossain is the AL favourite but former lawmaker and minister Syed Abul Hossain, who enjoys substantial influence in the area, has taken rebel candidate Mosiur Rahman under his aegis.

**BNP CANDIDATES 'UNDER PRESSURE'**  
The Daily Star correspondents yesterday talked to 12 BNP mayoral aspirants in as many municipalities and they alleged that they were under "massive pressure" to withdraw from the elections.

Abdullah Al Hasan in Raozan municipality of Chittagong said a panicky situation has been created in his area by the ruling party men so that the

BNP candidates cannot participate in the elections.

"Our activists who will work for me during the polls cannot enter Raozan fearing arrests or attacks by the Awami League men," said Abdullah, member secretary of BNP's Chittagong (North) District unit.

Shanaz Akhter, BNP's mayoral candidate in Laksam municipality of Comilla, made the same allegation.

A BNP activist working for her came under attack by the AL men on Sunday, alleged Shanaz, the lone female mayor candidate endorsed by the BNP.

She is the wife of Humayun Kabir Parvez, a victim of "forced disappearance".

BNP-backed Motiur Rahman in Bakerganj municipality of Barisal alleged that the ruling party activists were gathering "a huge number of outsiders" in the area to create panic and fear among his supporters.

Meanwhile, a BNP delegation led by Abdul Moyeen Khan yesterday met Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Rakibuddin Ahmad and submitted a set of allegations to him.

"No one except the ruling party men could submit nomination papers in Feni. Dozens of ruling party men have already been elected unopposed there," the BNP standing committee member told journalists after the meeting.

Over 3,000 leaders and activists of the BNP were arrested in the last one month, he alleged.

"If BNP men cannot stay home or move freely, and law enforcers intimidate them, who would electioneer for the party candidates?"

The BNP leader demanded that the Election Commission take steps to hold the municipal polls in a fair manner.

Later, the CEC told the media that the commission would take necessary actions, if any candidate faced any obstructions or difficulties in taking part in the polls.

## JMB operative

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[investigation officer in the case] would say that."

Contacted, IO ABM Zahidul Islam, officer-in-charge of Kaunia Police Station, said the 28-year-old was arrested in a raid on his village home in Pirgacha upazila on December 2.

Several bomb-making equipment and three sharp weapons, including one believed to be used in the murder of Rahamat, were recovered from the house, he claimed.

Police sources said the arrest had not been disclosed earlier for investigation-related reasons.

Hoshi, 65, was shot dead by unidentified assailants on October 3, just five days after Italian aid worker Cesare Tavella was murdered in the capital's diplomatic area.

Witnesses said they had heard gunshots and saw three men fleeing on a bike soon after Hoshi's murder.

In another attack, Rahamat, 55, was hacked to death in Choita intersection area of the same upazila on November 11.

Two days earlier, three criminals had shot and injured Ruhul Amin, 45, personal assistant of the RMCH director, in the city's Ideal Intersection area. He somehow survived the attack.

**JMB MAN ON REMAND**

A Rangpur court yesterday placed Isahak Ali, an alleged member of the JMB, on an eight-day remand in the Hoshi killing case.

Senior Judicial Magistrate Shafiqul Alam passed the order after the IO produced the arrestee before the court with a prayer to interrogate him for the same number of days.

IO Zahidul Islam said they arrested Isahak at Tangailpara village on Monday night with the help of Pirgacha police.

## Padma abuzz

FROM PAGE 1

Hasan Hawlader, who lives in Mawa, said, "At the beginning, we did not believe that the bridge would be built. Today we feel happy to see that our dream will come true."

The 75-year-old man thanked Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for her strong determination to build the 6.15 km-long bridge.

Like Benu and Hasan, many people told this correspondent that they felt happy to see the rapid progress in construction work.

Thousands of concrete blocks were piled up on either side of the Padma for river training.

The project sites are teeming with local and foreign engineers, officials and workers. Army personnel were monitoring work of the approach roads and giving instructions to workers.

Piles of sand, stone, coal and brick were kept at Mawa intersection for constructing a 1.6 km-long approach road.

On the other side of the river, trucks were bringing sand, cement, stone and soil for a 10.5 km-long approach road at Janjira point. Loaders and excavators were also at work.

Project officials said around 60 per cent work of the approach road had already been done.

They also mentioned that construction of six bridges and 13 underpasses, which are part of the road, is almost complete.

The pace of work quickened in the last few weeks, as the prime minister is expected to visit the sites on December 12 to officially inaugurate the construction of the main bridge.

Officials involved in the project said soil test was already done at 16 of the 30 piling sites for the four-lane road and rail bridge.

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader and senior officials of his ministry visit the sites almost every day to supervise work.

Talking to The Daily Star recently, the minister said, "Padma bridge is no longer a dream. It's a reality now. We are on track and we will complete the project in time."

Asked, Padma Bridge Project Director Shafiqul Islam said the work would gather pace gradually, and hopefully the bridge would be open to public by December 2018.

The government is building the bridge with its own funds of Tk 28,000 crore, as the donors, including the World Bank, suspended their pledged assistance for Bangladesh's largest infrastructure project over an allegation of corruption conspiracy.

China Railway Major Bridge Engineering Construction Company is building the main bridge, which will establish direct rail communications between the capital and the country's southwest region.

Another major component of the project is river training, which is being carried out by another Chinese company, Sinohydro Corporation Ltd.

Local firms have been constructing the approach roads since 2013, which are scheduled to be completed by the end of next year.

Bangladesh Army, Buet and Korea Expressway Corporation and Associate are supervising construction of the bridge that is expected to boost the country's trade, and development and economic activities.

## 5 injured

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makeshift explosive thrown either from a car or a nearby residential building.

A spokeswoman for Moscow city hall's health department said four people received medical attention Monday night and three of them were hospitalised.

A fifth person turned to the authorities for help and was hospitalised yesterday, she told AFP.

## Pakistanis tried to keep foreign journos away

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Sheikh Mujibur Rahman taking over power from the repressing West Pakistanis. The world interest was not so much for the Bangalis as for Pakistan, a strong ally of the US in the global politics of Cold War. The US was pouring in huge military aid to Pakistan in its fight against the spread of communism.

They got more than they had expected as the Pakistan army cracked down on the unarmed civilians on March 25 midnight in history's most horrendous civilian annihilation nicknamed "Operation Searchlight".

Little did the journalists know that something of such monstrosity was waiting for them.

They had been busy covering the Sheikh Mujibur Rahman-Zulfikar Ali Bhutto talks the whole day. At night, as they were relaxing after filing their reports, they heard the ominous sounds of tank guns and machineguns.

The newsmen were baffled. They wanted to know from soldiers posted at the hotel what was happening. The only answer was death threats.

Several journalists went to the 11th floor where Bhutto was staying to ask him if he knew anything about the shooting.

Robert Kaylor of United Press International (UPI) later wrote how Bhutto reacted to the massacre: "There are two of his (Bhutto's) bodyguards carrying assault rifles standing in the hallway (of the hotel's 11th floor). A member of Bhutto's party comes into the hall and says they have no idea what has happened. He says Bhutto is asleep and instructions are to wake him at 7:30 am."

Sydney H Schanberg of the New York Times who was in Dhaka that night later wrote in his report: "Every time newsmen in the hotel asked offi-

cers for information, they were rebuffed. All attempts to reach diplomatic missions failed. In one confrontation, a captain grew enraged at a group of newsmen who had walked out the front door to talk to him. He ordered them back into the building and, to their retreating backs, he shouted, "I can handle you. If I can kill my own people, I can kill you."

The journalists were kept confined completely cut off from any information about the genocide. That was a priority of the Pakistan army because it did not want the world to know of the atrocities.

Pakistan was a recipient of US military aid and was apprehensive that if the US came to know how the US supplied weapons had been used to kill civilians then military assistance might stop. Eventually this happened but not until the terrible vengeance of the Pakistan army had turned East Pakistan into a dark land of blood, tears, and laments.

So to keep journalists away from the hotspot, the military ordered all foreign newsmen to leave Dhaka by 6.15pm of March 26.

Reporter John E Woodruff of The Baltimore Sun wrote on March 28 when a reporter inquired about the nature of the "advisory" to leave Dhaka, Major Siddiq Salik, the Pakistan army's public relations officer, said: "Some advice is obligatory."

Schanberg writes: "It was 8:20, just after President Yahya's speech, their convoy of five trucks with soldiers in front and back, left for the airport."

Just before leaving, the lieutenant colonel in charge was asked by a newsman why the foreign press had to leave.

"We want you to leave because it would be dangerous for you," he said. "It will be too bloody." All the hotel employees and other foreigners in the hotel

believed that once the newsmen left, carnage would begin.

"At the airport, with firing going on in the distance, the newsmen's luggage was rigidly checked and some television film, particularly that of the British Broadcasting Corporation, was confiscated.

On the ride to the airport in a guarded convoy of military trucks, the newsmen saw troops setting fire to the thatched-roof houses of poor Bengalis who live along the road and who are some of the staunchest supporters of the self-rule movement."

The Pakistan army did a full body search of the journalists before they boarded the plane to ensure that the newsmen could not take out any audio or visual documentation of the carnage.

Robert Kaylor filed this report on March 29 from Hong Kong: "I get my customs check and the inspector tells me he is under 'special orders' when I tell him that we were already checked in Dhaka. He confiscates my notebooks, carbon copies of cables I have filed from Dhaka, newspaper clippings and any scraps of paper he can find in my suitcase, including letters from my wife. He then seizes 14 rolls of unexposed film I have in my camera bag and puts everything in brown manila envelopes. When I ask about it, he says it will be sent to me by mail. I ask when, and he shrugs his shoulders. 'Later,' he says. He declines to issue a receipt."

But not all journalists could be rounded up that March 26 night. Simon Dring evaded the army roundup by hiding on the roof of the Intercontinental Hotel and later went around the city to see at first hand the results of the Army's operation.

He was put on a plane two days later, when he was caught, and then he

filed his famous report that defined the war in East Pakistan. Michael Laurent, an Associated Press photographer, also evaded arrest for a couple of days, as did Arnold Zeitlin, the Associated Press correspondent, who could avoid the army confinement because he was out dining with friends on the night of March 25.

These reporters and many others continuously reported the genocide in Bangladesh. These reports proved why a free media is so important and how a free media can change the world opinion. Pakistan army-controlled media, which was full of propaganda about "normalcy" prevailing in East Pakistan and that the Pakistan army was on righteous war against "miscreants," failed to convince the world.

Here are some examples of how the western journalists reported the genocide. Schanberg's report "In Dhaka, Troops use artillery to halt revolt" published on March 28, 1971 in New York Times gives a vivid description of Pak Army's brutality.

"The Pakistan army is using artillery and heavy machine guns against unarmed East Pakistani civilians to crush the movement for autonomy in this province of 75 million people."

"When the military action began on Thursday night, soldiers, shouting victory slogans, set ablaze large areas in many parts of Dhaka after first shooting into the buildings with automatic rifles, machine guns and recoilless rifles."

When the newsmen tried to go outside to find out what was happening, they were forced back in by the army and told they would be shot if they tried to step out of the building. The firing increased around 1pm and 25 minutes later, the phones at the hotel went dead.

Sydney Schanberg said later in an

interview with New York Times journalist Gary J Bass, who later wrote The Blood Telegram, the confined journalists watched from the hotel flames from Dhaka University, where, Schanberg says, the army seemed to be shooting artillery.

"The trapped reporters watched a Pakistani soldier on a jeep that had a mounted machine gun-equipment probably provided by the United States, Schanberg recalled. They started shooting at students coming from the university, up the road about a mile. They were singing patriotic songs in Bengali. And then the army opened up. We couldn't tell when they hit the ground, if they were ducking or killed."

Along the road to the airport, Schanberg saw burned huts and houses. "It was clear they had killed a lot of people."

Laurent in the report of The Times described, "A mass grave had been hastily covered at the Jagannath Hall and 200 students were reported killed in Iqbal Hall. About 20 bodies were still lying in the grounds and the dormitories. Troops are reported to have fired bazookas into the medical college hospital, but the casualty toll was not known."

The most devastating documentation probably came from the NBC television channel of the US which showed a video clip of students being mowed down at Dhaka University that was filmed by a teacher.

All this and many more reports started building the world sentiment against Pakistan. Journalists started asking the State Department press briefings why American weapons are being used against civilians. Even the US Congress started debating the US role in the war. The world opinion overwhelmingly swayed in favour of the Bangalis.