

UP POLLS VIOLENCE Jubo League activist dies

OUR CORRESPONDENT

A Jubo League activist, who was injured in a post-poll clash, succumbed to his injuries early yesterday at a hospital in Bogra, raising the death toll to 32 in the violence over Union Parishad (UP) elections. Deceased Liton Mia, 30, was the son of Zinnat Ali, a resident of Pathanpara village under Sonatola upazila in Bogra.

On Saturday morning, a clash, between the supporters of member-elect of Dikdair UP under Sonatola upazila Abdus Samad and member candidate Mohammad Selim who lost, left at least 40 hurt. Following the clash, the local upazila administration imposed section-144 in the area from 1:00pm Saturday to 10:00am yesterday to evade further clashes.

Liton Mia, a supporter of Abdus Samad and an activist of local unit Jubo league, was critically injured in the clash and rushed to the Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College Hospital (SZMCH) in Bogra.

He passed away around 4:45am yesterday. Abdul Mottaleb, Officer-in-Charge (OC) of Sonatola Police Station said the body was sent to SZMCH's morgue for autopsy and a murder case will be lodged with the police station and that one person has been detained in this connection. Elections to 725 UPs were held on March 22 in the first phase and 639 another UPs on March 31 in the second phase.

Breathtaking

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third delivery when Chris Gayle departed. Gayle tried an ambitious slog after hitting a first-ball boundary but could only find the fielder at long-on to trigger wild celebrations in the English camp.

Willey then got semi-final star Lendl Simmons out leg before wicket for nought to leave the Windies tottering at 11 for three.

Samuels counter-attacked by hitting Chris Jordan for three boundaries in the sixth and last over of the powerplay that cost England 16 runs.

Samuels, who was given an early life after wicketkeeper Jos Buttler grassed a caught behind, stitched a 75-run partnership with Dwayne Bravo (25) to help the Windies rebuild.

Willey turned up for his second spell with a double strike to hurt Windies' hopes of reviving their chase as the asking-rate kept growing, but new man Brathwaite had other ideas.

Brathwaite managed an unbeaten 54-run stand with man-of-the-match Samuels to stun England.

Earlier West Indies' bowlers justified captain Darren Sammy's decision to field first as Samuel Badree and Andre Russell put England on the backfoot at only 23 for three in 4.4 overs.

Opening the attack for the Windies, leg-spinner Badree got Jason Roy clean out for a second ball duck and also accounted for struggling English skipper Eoin Morgan (5) in his third over.

Root (54), who struck his third half-century of the tournament, and Buttler (36) then came up with a fine re-building act to manage a 61-run fourth wicket partnership.

Medium-pacer Brathwaite got Buttler against the run of play when Bravo took a good catch at deep mid-wicket before celebrating with his customary 'Champions' dance.

Sammy soon cashed in on Bravo's catch to bring him on to bowl and the medium-pacer obliged with two wickets in his second over.

England's batting soon crumbled after Brathwaite got dangerman Root trudging back as a scoop shot turned out to be the in-form batsman's undoing.

Brathwaite and Bravo shared three wickets apiece to hit England hard. David Willey's late cameo of 21 was studded with a boundary and two sixes and to give the England total some respect.

Syrian forces enter IS-held town in Palmyra

REUTERS, Beirut

Syrian and allied forces, backed by Russian air strikes, entered the Islamic State-held town of al-Qaryatayn on Sunday, having gradually surrounded it over the past few days, state media and a monitoring group said.

Al-Qaryatayn is 100 km (60 miles) west of Palmyra, which government forces recaptured from Islamic State last Sunday.

The town has been held by the militant group since late August. Syrian state media said government forces entered from a number of directions. A Syrian military source told SANA state news agency the army now controlled the northern district and was clearing the area of explosives planted by Islamic State.

The agency also quizzed those



Baskets with exportable crabs piled up for screening at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport. Top right, fish wrapped in cartons being screened prior to their export, and bottom right, betel leaves and green chillies following a shipment failure. Lengthy cargo screening process of perishable goods is causing shipment failures at the airport in Dhaka. The photos were taken last week. PHOTO: COLLECTED

Exporters left in the lurch

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Exporter Sumon thinks the consequences can be dangerous, especially because the buyers may start looking for alternative sources. "Now that I missed the supply deadline, I am worried whether or not my Saudi buyers would again place orders for me."

"Usually, I export perishable goods worth \$2 lakh every month. But given the latest situation, I don't think I can go even close to that ... Now I am mostly sitting idle at my office," he added.

Mosharraf Hossain is the owner of Excelsior Cargo Agent that was working at the airport as the Clearing and Forwarding (C&F) agent for Sumon's goods on March 25.

"That night, a total of 2,300kgs of perishable goods handled by my company could not be shipped ... A lot of shipments like these are offloaded as flights are missed due to the screening delays," he said.

"The quality of the perishable goods falls due to the delay. So, the exporters have a lot to lose here," he added.

Only four scanners are there to screen more than 800 tonnes of

goods every day, which is mainly blamed for the delay in the shipping process.

Previously, it took 17-18 hours for the shipments to arrive at the airport and to reach any European destinations. But now, it takes nearly two days as flights are often missed due to time "wasted" in screening, said many of around 200 exporters who send perishable goods to different countries from Bangladesh.

"It now takes about three hours to screen the cargo of one exporter, which was possible in 20-30 minutes previously," said Foyez Ahmed, a perishable goods exporter and C&F agent.

Civil Aviation and Tourism Minister Rashed Khan Menon said his ministry had already floated tender for importing a few more cargo scanners.

"Importing those will take time," he told The Daily Star over the phone, declining to say exactly how long it all may take.

The exporters also complained that they are facing space crisis in shipping goods to the UK in flights operated by foreign airlines.

Before March 8, the national flag

carrier Biman used to carry a big chunk of the export items from Dhaka to the UK, a major hub of vegetable export in Europe.

But now, the cargo flights are going through re-screening in a third country. The airports in Dubai, Qatar, Hong Kong and Bangkok are mostly used for that.

So, the exporters have to wait twice for their goods to be screened -- first at the Shahjalal airport and then at another one in some other countries.

"With the ban [on direct cargo flights], we need an additional day for exporting goods to the UK. This causes at least 20 percent quality loss of the goods," said Khaledur Rahman, proprietor of Khaled Trade Syndicate.

Before the ban, Bangladesh used to export 80-100 tonnes of vegetables and fruits to the UK every day but it now has come down to 50-70 tonnes, he said.

"I myself used to export 20 tonnes a month. But it has significantly declined now," said Khaledur.

In February, 2,135 tonnes of vegetables and fruits out of 12,993

tonnes were exported by air but the quantity was falling drastically due to the lengthy screening process.

Every day, a total of 200-300 tonnes of cargo cannot be shipped from the airport due to the delays, said Mahbulul Anam, president of Bangladesh Freight Forwarders' Association. "We are going through a critical time."

Mohammed Mansur, general secretary of Bangladesh Fruits, Vegetables & Allied Products Exporters' Association, said, "Though the airlines have not yet started charging us for the re-screening of goods in a third country, we are worried about the fact that the quality of goods falls due to the delays in screening."

"Previously, perishable goods were screened on a priority basis, but not anymore. I myself missed a shipment of 4.5 tonnes of vegetables worth \$13,000 to Qatar yesterday due to the delay."

Though his shipment arrived at the Shahjalal airport at 12:00am, it missed the 7:40am flight as screening had not yet been completed, he said. "I then sold the goods at a throwaway price in Shyambazar."

Bangladesh may enter list of risky nations again

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Bangkok-based body by July this year, the country will again be branded as a risky nation, said officials at the Bangladesh Bank and the Banking Division.

Around two years ago, Bangladesh was dropped from the APG list of risky countries.

The APG has sent a draft assessment of the country's efforts against money laundering and terror financing to the Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit (BFIU) under the central bank.

Among the 11 indicators of the APG, Bangladesh was marked substantial in one indicator, moderate in five, and low in the remaining five, according to the draft assessment.

The final decision will come at the annual meeting of the APG in July. But before the meeting, officials of the APG and Bangladesh government will meet next month.

Bangladesh's response to the APG draft assessment will determine whether the country's status will be demoted.

The BFIU, which leads the country's efforts against money laundering and terror financing, has sent letters to the home ministry and the Banking Division, informing them about the impending risk of being rebranded as a risky country.

If everything remains the same,

Bangladesh will be branded as a "risky" country, said the letter.

Bangladesh will have to improve its rating in two indicators from "moderate" to "substantial" to avoid demotion, it said.

Seeking anonymity, a BFIU official said, "We will get time to make improvements in the problematic areas till July. We hope everything will be fine till then and the country's status will not be downgraded."

In a letter to the senior secretary of the home ministry on March 23, the BFIU said though Bangladesh's technical compliance was good, the implementation of the technical terms was not up to standard.

Dhaka has formulated national risk assessment report on how to fight money laundering and terror financing, and prepared National Strategy Paper 2015-17.

But the APG said the strategy paper has not explained clearly how to deal with terrorist financing, and no national strategy has been formulated, according to the BFIU letter.

The BFIU will now sit with the ACC, the National Board of Revenue, the Banking Division, law enforcement agencies and other government departments to take urgent steps to retain the country's present status.

If a country scores low and moderate in nine or more indicators, it is

classified as a risky country under the International Cooperation Review Group (ICRG) of the APG.

And if it scores low or moderate in eight or less number of indicators, it is included in the list of countries that have implemented the indicators of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF).

The APG is an autonomous and collaborative international organisation founded in 1997 in Thailand with 41 members and a number of international and regional observers.

Bangladesh is a founding member of the APG.

The APG website says Bangladesh is currently strengthening its AML/CFT system. The country, a party to the UN Vienna Convention 1988 and the UN Terrorist Financing Convention, has enacted an anti-money laundering law with respect to serious offences and reporting suspicious transactions.

In 2002, Bangladesh became the first country in South Asia to promulgate Money Laundering Prevention Act in line with the recommendations from the FATF, an intergovernmental organisation which combats money laundering.

Bangladesh got membership of the Egmont Group, a global network of financial intelligence units, in 2013. The country also came out of FATF's grey list in 2014.

A delegation of the APG visited

Bangladesh last October to inspect different initiatives to restrict money laundering and terrorist funding.

During the visit, the team couldn't get any clear idea about which government agency leads probes in lawsuits over money laundering and terror financing.

After the team left Bangladesh, the government made moves to resolve the issue, and reformed laws, giving the Anti-Corruption Commission the responsibility for probing corruption issues and the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of police for investigating money laundering issues, officials said.

At its meeting with Bangladesh officials in October last year, the APG team raised questions about recent major irregularities in the financial sector such as Hall-Mark scam and BASIC and Sonali Bank scams as well as sluggish pace in investigation.

An APG delegation is expected to visit Bangladesh from May 2 to 4 to finalise the draft of the assessment report.

In the upcoming meeting, the APG may raise questions about the recent incidents of ATM fraud and the \$101 million BB reserve heist, said officials at the BB and the Banking Division.

They said the government would inform the APG about the measures taken since the last meeting, and also

TALKS ON ILLEGAL MIGRATION EU delegation due today

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Amid growing concern over illegal migration to Europe, a high-powered delegation from the European Union arrives in Bangladesh today on a three-day visit.

The delegation would discuss with high government officials on easing uncontrolled mass movement of people into Europe.

Though the talks with ministers and high officials as well as stakeholders will dominate the migration issue, other vital issues like foreign policy, labour, human rights, politics, freedom of expression, governance, democracy, trade and economic cooperation will also come up for discussion during the April 4-6 visit.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Md Shahriar Alam told The Daily Star that the EU delegation is coming to Bangladesh to hold "EU-Bangladesh Migration Dialogue" with the foreign secretary.

Foreign ministry officials said the senior level delegation will hold talks with the high government officials on a number of issues, mainly related to migration.

Diplomatic sources said the delegation will hold a meeting with Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Minister Nurul Islam at 2:00pm today.

The delegation will also meet the foreign secretary tomorrow. It will also hold a meeting at the home ministry.

According to the EU, amidst the millions of Syrian and Libyan war refugees seeking asylum in Europe, there are also some Bangladeshis.

The EU also said the migration issue is "a global and multifaceted" challenge that requires cooperation of all its "partners".

Diplomatic sources said the visit of the EU delegation just after the EU-Turkey deal is important and the delegation might seek cooperation from Bangladesh in curbing illegal migration from Bangladesh and the region.

In February, a European Parliament delegation visited Dhaka and discussed Bangladesh's politics, freedom of expression, labour, and human rights issues with politicians, business leaders, NGOs, and the media.

In November last year, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on the state of freedom of expression in Bangladesh and condemned the increasing attacks by "Islamist extremists" on secularist

Writ seeks judicial probe

FROM PAGE 1
Demanding justice for Tonu, students of various educational institutions, including Dhaka University and Chittagong University, observed a daylong strike yesterday.

Demonstrations were held in the capital in support of the strike, blocking road at Doyel Chattar and TSC intersection.

The protesters condemned law enforcement agencies' failure to make any arrest in connection with the March 20 murder of Sohagi Jahan Tonu, a second-year history student of Comilla Victoria Government College and a theatre activist.

The Criminal Investigation Department (CID), which is tasked with probing the murder, yesterday interrogated several people, including one of Tonu's acquaintances Peyar Ahmed, a private university student, said a CID source.

The agency also quizzed those

who took Tonu to the hospital, the physician who declared Tonu dead, and those present during the first autopsy.

"We have interrogated several people. As we are still in the dark, we are trying to get some clues through interrogation," said Nazmul Karim Khan, special superintendent of CID's Comilla-Noakhali division.

Talking to The Daily Star, Dr Kamoda Prosad Saha, head of the forensic department of Comilla Medical College, said they received the viscera report of the first autopsy.

"We will prepare the autopsy report on receiving results of some other tests," he added.

The body of Tonu was exhumed on Wednesday for a fresh autopsy as police say they found the first one not matching their inquest report.

However, the findings of the first autopsy were not made public. Also in yesterday's petition, the

lawyer prayed to the court to order the government to pay the victim's family Tk 30 lakh in compensation.

"The High Court may hold a hearing on the petition tomorrow [today]," said the lawyer.

MIZANUR STILL TRACELESS
The family members have yet to know the whereabouts of Mizanur Rahman, a friend of Tonu's younger brother Anwar Hossain Rubel.

He was picked up from his Narayansar village home in Burichang upazila of Comilla in the early hours of March 28 by "some people identifying themselves as law enforcers", alleged his family.

Mizanur has remained missing since then, said his mother Sahida Akter and elder sister Khaleda while talking to reporters at the Comilla Press Club on Saturday.

According to the family members, a general diary was filed with Burichang Police Station in this regard on March

30. They also contacted the Rapid Action Battalion and Detective Branch of police.

"Mizanur made three phone calls to Tonu's brother Anwar Hossain Rubel after watching his [Rubel's] interview on a television channel on Tonu killing," said Khaleda.

She thinks Mizanur was "picked up" just because of his phone conversation with Rubel.

Contacted yesterday, Shah Abid Hossain, superintendent of police in Comilla, said they do not know where Mizanur is. "We are looking for him," he told The Daily Star around 9:00pm.

Amid the strike yesterday, most of the classes were suspended at the DU. There were no classes at the CU, but examinations were held at the both universities.

Addressing a press conference on the DU campus, Ashrafur Alam Sohel, convener of Progressive Students' Alliance, said the strike was observed

in many education institutions across the country.

He announced that the alliance and Anti-Imperialist Students Union will lay siege to the home ministry on April 7 on the same ground.

Blasting the home minister for his comment that a few incidents of rape do not indicate deterioration of law and order, Ashrafur said such comments from government high-ups encourage the rapists.

The home minister made the comment at a programme in the capital's Jatrabari on Saturday.

Bangladesh Chhatra Union also called a nationwide student strike for today.

In Munshiganj, students and socio-cultural activists formed a human chain at Shilpakala Chattar and later submitted a memorandum to the prime minister through district administration demanding punishment of Tonu's killer(s).