



Saarc agriculture ministers meet Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina following the 3rd Meeting of Saarc Ministers of Agriculture at a city hotel yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

Sir Abed gets award from Michigan University

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sir Fazle Hasan Abed, founder and chairperson of Brac, has received the Thomas Francis Jr Medal in Global Public Health award from the University of Michigan.



Mark Schissel, president of the university, presented the medal to the development activist at a ceremony at the Ross School of Business on Wednesday, a Brac statement said. Sir Abed was recognised for his work to ensure a healthier future for people living in poverty worldwide. The medal, periodically awarded to a global leader whose work addresses the most pressing global health challenges, honours the legacy of the University of Michigan epidemiologist who mentored Dr Jonas Salk in his development of the polio vaccine.

"It is indeed a great honour to receive the Thomas Francis Jr Medal in Global Public Health," said Sir Abed at the award ceremony. "It gives me tremendous pleasure and I thank the University of Michigan for bestowing this prestigious award on me," he added.

In a statement, the 80-year-old, who was knighted by the Queen in 2010, also said there is much excitement today about the potential of new technology to end human poverty. "This can make us forget that many solutions already exist. We can reach millions more today by focusing less on 'what' and more on 'how'."

The Brac, the world's largest non-governmental organisation in terms

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50pc cost hike

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The subway project is not even on the list of next 20 years' revised strategic transport plan.

An official of the road transport ministry said all these projects were taken up without proper study. As a result, they get little or no attention, causing delay in their implementation.

The Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) line-3, part of the Greater Dhaka Sustainable Urban Transport Project, will be jointly funded by the government, the Asian Development Bank, the French Agency for Development (AFD) and the Global Environment Facility.

Once in operation, the route will facilitate movement of 40,000 people between Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka and Gazipur every hour.

The design and the operation plan were finalised in December last year.

Ten international companies -- mostly from China, Korea and India -- submitted bids for the construction job. The documents were sent to the ADB headquarters in Manila, the capital of the Philippines, for evaluating the companies' eligibility.

The authorities in Dhaka expect to get back the documents with suggestions within two weeks, new Project Director AQM Ekram Ullah said on Wednesday.

"Once we get them [the documents], we will open the financial offers of the bidders," he said. They will then select an eligible bidder and send the proposal to the cabinet committee on purchase for approval. The process is likely to take a couple of weeks from now.

Once the purchase committee approves the proposal, a work order will be issued to the lowest bidder. It depends on the ADB and the

purchase committee as to when the construction work will begin, said Afil Uddin, the immediate past project director. "We hope we will be able to start the construction in June."

But the new project chief said that it might not be possible, but that they would begin it "as early as possible".

The project work was supposed to begin in December 2014 and end this year. The revised deadline is 2018.

The BRT project will have six flyovers, four and a half kilometres of elevated road, 141 connecting roads, 12km drains, and a new 12-lane bridge in Tongi. The flyovers will be built at the airport crossing, Uttara Jasimuddin Road, Kunia, Board Bazar, Vogra, and Chourasta in Gazipur.

Under the plan, the Dhaka Bus Rapid Transit Company Limited, a government entity, will operate 120 articulated buses on the route. The buses will run between the stops every 30 seconds.

The BRT project is expected to improve connectivity between Dhaka and Gazipur and cut down travel time by at least half. There will be direct buses apart from those that will connect all the points between Dhaka and Gazipur. Depending on the services, the travel time will be 40 minutes to an hour, which now takes at least two hours by public transport.

The second phase of the BRT line-3 will stretch from the airport to Jhilmil in Keraniganj. The World Bank has already financed the designing of the proposed 22km stretch.

"The design has already been completed. Now a discussion is going on with the global lender on the funding of the project," said an official of the project.

The government also plans to introduce such fast bus lanes in Manikganj, Gazipur, Narayanganj, Munshiganj and Narsingdi as per the draft of the BRT Act-2016 approved by the cabinet last month.

Cameron profited

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Downing Street staffers initially said that it was a "private matter" whether or not Cameron had benefited from the fund. It later issued a series of statements denying the prime minister currently benefited from offshore funds, or stood to do so in the future. Though, despite the clarifications, a number of questions still remained.

Labour has condemned the way information about Cameron's financial affairs was revealed with "drip, drip" statements, and the revelations will raise questions about why Cameron did not admit to personally profiting until five days after the Panama Papers were leaked.

But in an interview with IIV News, he insisted that it was a "fundamental misconception" that Blairmore Holdings, set up by his father Ian Cameron the 1980s and run from the Bahamas, was set up to avoid tax. He said his father was being "unfairly written about".

He said that his and Samantha Cameron's profit from the scheme was "subject to all the UK taxes in the normal ways".

Number 10 said Mr and Mrs Cameron bought their holding in April 1997 for £12,497 and sold it in January 2010 for £31,500.

"I paid income tax on the dividends, but there was a profit on it but it was less than the capital gains tax allowance, so I didn't pay capital gains tax, but it was subject to all the UK taxes in all the normal ways," Mr Cameron told IIV.

"So I want to be as clear as I can about the past, about the present, about the future, because frankly, I don't have anything to hide."

"I'm proud of my dad and what he did and the business he established and all the rest of it."

"I can't bear to see his name being dragged through the mud, as you can see, and for my own, I chose to take a different path from my father, grandfather and great-grandfather, who were all stockbrokers, and I've got nothing to hide in my arrangements and I'm very happy to answer questions about it."

2 wives, daughter of man burnt with acid

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A garment worker along with her daughter and one of her husband's wives suffered burns in an acid attack by two criminals allegedly hired by her husband at Rupp Nagar in the capital's Mirpur yesterday.

The garment worker, Mahfuza Atker Subarna, 30, is undergoing treatment at the burn unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital. Her daughter Sanjida Sultana Rima and her husband's wife Nilufar Begum took treatment there.

Mahfuza alleged her husband Suruj

Alam Khan, a worker of a dairy factory in Mirpur, had been torturing her for several years.

Around 6:00am yesterday, her husband woke her up, saying two men from her village came to visit, Mahfuza said.

"Waking up, I saw two men standing beside my husband. One of them wore a mask, but there were two packets in their hands. When I told my husband that I did not know them, one of them threw something at me. I felt like burning," Mahfuza said.

Sanjida and Nilufar, who were

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Their worst fear comes true

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Nazim's safety, and he had repeatedly asked his younger brother to stop writing about religion on Facebook.

Shamimuddin said Nazim deactivated his Facebook account for a while following insistence from him and the other two brothers.

Last year, four online activists and a publisher were brutally killed because of their secular writings and views.

Nazim's Facebook timeline shows he openly criticised religious bigotry in his status updates.

In a picture posted on his timeline, he is seen demonstrating with the words "Razakar Nipat Jaak" [down with razakars] written on his body.

Talking to BBC Bangla Service, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal said the government is looking into whether Nazim wrote anything "objectionable" on blogs.

An investigation into the killing is going on, he said.

Sources at Sir Salimullah Medical College Morgue where Nazim's body was sent for autopsy, said he was shot on the left side of his head from close range. The bullet pierced his skull.

There were three deep stab wounds on the right side of his head, they added.

The victim's nephew Zahidul Huq Suman told The Daily Star that Nazim's three brothers live in London.

"My uncles tried to take him to London, but he preferred to stay in Bangladesh and become a lawyer," he said.

Nazim's younger sister Nasima Begum said her brother was supposed to travel to their house in Sylhet yesterday. She said her mother, who has been suffering from old-age complications for months, couldn't believe that her son was no more.

"My brother was a friendly person. He moved to Dhaka several months ago for higher studies," she said while trying to choke back tears.

Nazim, son of Abdus Samad of Beaniabazar's Tilpara union in Sylhet, was

the fourth among eight siblings. His father and elder brother Julhash Uddin died years ago.

His fellow JnU students demonstrated on their campus from 10:00am to 2:30pm yesterday, and also brought out processions.

They decided to hold a rally at Shahbagh at 3:00pm today, and also threatened to go on strike for an indefinite period from Sunday unless the killers are identified and arrested by tomorrow.

Talking to this correspondent, Alauddin Sheikh, sub-inspector of Sutrapur Police Station, said police filed a murder case against four to five unknown persons over Nazim's murder as the victim's family was not "willing" to lodge a lawsuit.

Nazim's cousin Shamim Ahmed said they wouldn't file any case over the incident. "We leave the matter to police," he added.

Nazim's grisly murder has sparked widespread condemnation from local and international rights bodies that have voiced grave concern over the incident and urged the authorities to act promptly.

In a statement yesterday, Robert D Watkins, United Nations Resident Coordinator in Bangladesh, called upon the authorities to "adequately protect" online activists.

Urging the authorities to ensure a quick end to such atrocity, Watkins said, "In spite of the recent pause in the assassination of online activists, this attack demonstrates that this new killing is clearly part of a growing trend which undermines the freedom of expression and opinion in Bangladesh."

European Union Ambassador to Bangladesh Pierre Mayaudon also strongly condemned the killing.

Offering condolences to Nazim's bereaved family and friends, he hoped the perpetrators be brought to justice soon.

International rights body Amnesty International in a statement said vicious

killing of another secular activist is a reminder that the authorities are failing to protect people exercising their right to freedom of expression.

"There can be no justification for the brutal killing of Nazim Uddin Samad, who has apparently paid with his life for nothing but being brave enough to speak his mind. This is not just a senseless murder, it is a blatant attack on the right to freedom of expression."

Those responsible for the killings of secular activists must be held to account, anything less will send a signal that these attacks are tolerated and permitted by the government, it added.

Amnesty International also urged the authorities to ensure that activists and writers who are under threat are effectively protected.

UNB reports: The Committee to Protect Journalists urged the government to find out the motive behind the murder and take immediate steps to bring his attackers to justice.

"Bloggers like Nazim Uddin Samad are vital to ensuring a diversity of views. But one by one, extremists are silencing these voices, while the government looks on," CPJ's Asia Programme Senior Research Associate Sumit Galhotra said in a statement.

The government should take immediate steps to arrest Nazim's murderers and protect vulnerable bloggers, he said.

The Center for Inquiry, a US-based organisation that promotes secularism, expressed outrage over the killing. "It is both heartbreaking and maddening to think that this bright and passionate young student, with his whole life ahead of him, was so brutally and callously murdered, almost certainly by Islamic extremists, all because he spoke out for secularism and reason. All of us at the Center for Inquiry extend our deepest condolences to his friends and family," said Michael De Dora, CFI's director of public policy and main representative to the UN.

In a statement, Ain O Salish Kendra



The grief-stricken sister of Nazimuddin Samad, a student of Jagannath University who was hacked and shot to death in the capital on Wednesday, wails in their home at Baraut village in Bianibazar of Sylhet yesterday. Her younger sister and one of their relatives are behind her.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

said recurrence of such an incident proves that the government and law enforcers failed to investigate and identify those who had committed similar crimes before.

In the meantime, Gonojagoron Mancha held a rally at Shahbagh in the capital to protest the killing and also brought out a torch procession on Dhaka University campus in the evening.

Talking to The Daily Star, Hasan Shahriar, spokesperson for Beaniabazar Gonojagoron Mancha, said, "Nazim was

an activist of secular movement and Gonojagoron Mancha. He was very liberal and we suspect he was killed by militants."

In Sylhet, Gonojagoron Mancha announced that it would stage a protest and bring out a procession at 5:00pm today.

Debashish Debu, spokesperson for Sylhet Gonojagoron Mancha, said the pattern of the killing fits that of the other similar attacks on secular activists by radical Islamist groups over the past few years.

Since February 2013, five secular online activists and a publisher were hacked to death with sharp weapons in a similar fashion.

Bloggers Avijit Roy, Niloy Neel, Ananta Bijoy Das, Oyasiqr Rahman Babu, and Jagriti Prokashoni owner Faisal Arefin Dipan, publisher of Avijit's books, were murdered last year.

Earlier in February 2013, blogger Ahmed Rajib Haider, also a Gonojagoron Mancha activist, was hacked to death near his home in Mirpur.