



The smashed front end of the coach that collided with a bus on Rangpur-Dinajpur highway yesterday. Survivors said reckless driving of the coach helper, who was standing in for a sleepy driver, caused the crash.

PHOTO: STAR

Fund dispute led to muezzin killing

Four suspects arrested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police have arrested four suspects of the murder of Jabbu Khanam mosque muezzin in the capital's Islampur over two weeks ago.

They claimed that during primary interrogation, the suspects admitted the plot and execution of the killing of Maulana Belal Hossain, 49.

The arrestees are mosque khadem Habibur Rahman Habib, 20, Belal's assistant Hafez Mosharrar Hossain, 19, his aide Sarwar Halim, 38, and mosque staff Hafez Tofazzal Hossain, 23.

"Habib had masterminded and executed the killing following a dispute [with Belal] over the mosque funds," Mofiz Uddin Ahmed, deputy commissioner (Lalbagh division) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, told a press briefing yesterday.

Habib had planned the killing with Mosharrar and Tofazzal at a mosque in Keraniganj a few days before the killing. Belal gave Sarwar about Tk eight lakh to invest in the share market, which made Habib angry with Belal, he said.

At the briefing at DMP media centre, the police official said police nabbed Habib, Mosharrar and Tofazzal from Narail, Netrakona and Dhaka's Keraniganj in separate drives on Tuesday.

Sarwar was held under Section 54 of the CrPC from Islampur days after Belal was murdered on April 4, he added.

Based on information from Habib, police recovered the "murder weapon", a knife, from a drain in Babubazar area, the DMP official added.

Replying to a query, the police official said they would investigate whether the suspects have any militant link.

The Jabbu Khanam mosque has a handsome monthly income from various sources including shops in the building. Belal used to handle the financial matters and invest money outside for interest, the DC said.

"Habib and others wanted their shares in it, but the muezzin refused. The suspects failed to kill the muezzin several times in the past."

On the fateful night, Habib took position on the stairs between the first and second floors of the mosque around 10:00pm and waited for Belal who was outside at that time, he said.

Habib met Belal on the stairs around 10:45pm and stabbed Belal to death at one stage.

Meanwhile, investigators said a Dhaka court yesterday placed Habib, Mosharrar and Tofazzal on three-day remand each and Sarwar on one-day remand in the murder case filed with Kotwali Police Station.

12 lives lost on highway

FROM PAGE 1

Witnesses said the buses leapt to five to six feet up in the air after the collision.

The coach still had around 20 passengers on its roof at that time, they added.

Eight people died on the spot and five more died on their way to or in the hospital, said police.

The injured were rushed to Rangpur Medical College Hospital (RMCH) and Taraganj Upazila Health Complex.

The fate of the driver/helper of the coach could not be known.

The dead are: Jinnat Rehana Banu, 32; Chandan Roy, 35; Mohammad Ali Kala, 45; Abdul Matin, 35; Liton Islam, 34; Babul Mia, 28; Akabbar Ali, 65; Mizanur Rahman, 35; Alekh Uddin, 50; Babu, 26, said police. The identities of the remaining could not be ascertained.

Mohidul Islam, additional superintendent of highway police, told The Daily Star over telephone, "Some injured told me that they protested when the driver asked the helper to drive and went to the rear to sleep. They also asked the helper to drive slowly but he did not listen."

After the crash, locals barricaded the Rangpur-Dinajpur highway for two hours from 11:00am.

Getting assurance from the local administration of exemplary punish-

ment for the culprits, they withdrew the blockade, reports our Rangpur correspondent.

Most drivers are least bothered about safety and they drive recklessly without almost any intervention from law enforcers on the highways.

The authorities' reluctance to punish unruly drivers, helpers and vehicle owners help recurrence of fatal road crashes in regular intervals.

There is only one instance in which a driver was punished for reckless driving and killing people.

According to World Health Organisation, more than 21,000 people die a year on the roads of Bangladesh, which takes a heavy toll on victims' families and the country's economy.

There are a number of high court directives to improve road safety but no significant improvement in road-fatality statistics has been observed.

In 2010, the UN General Assembly adopted the resolution Decade of Action for Road Safety (2011-2020) with a goal to stabilise and reduce predicted levels of road traffic fatalities around the world.

The issue has also been included in the adopted Sustainable Development Goals with a target to halve traffic deaths and injuries by 2020.

The government is visibly doing little to this end.

If not AL, who's with it then?

FROM PAGE 1

Helali and the other by Abdul Hasan Sheikh Shariatpuri.

On April 9, the faction led by Shariatpuri demanded a ban on Bangla New Year festival terming it haram (forbidden in Islam) and urged the government to cancel the festival bonus for Pahela Baishakh, saying the allowance should instead be given to Muslims on the occasion of Eid-e-Miladunnabi.

It went as far as to demand resignation of the chief justice saying, "A Hindu chief justice in a country where 98 percent people are Muslims is an assault on the sentiment of religious Muslims."

The faction also demanded revoking the minimum marriageable age for girls, making a law with a provision of death penalty for demeaning Islam, banning the CHT Commission, taking all Indian TV channels in Bangladesh off the air and cancelling the education policy and Vested Property Return (amendment) Act.

Yesterday, The Daily Star photographer was barred from entering the Olama League office on the second floor of the AL headquarters. Later, a guard of locked the entrance to the floor.

Leaders of both the factions say they want to run the country in line with the Madina Charter. They also cite Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's comment on March 7, 2015, that the country would be run according to the Charter and the last sermon and directives of Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH).

According to the AL constitution, the party is committed to fighting communalism and ensuring religious freedom and human rights of all -- irrespective of religion, caste, gender, community and ethnic identity.

On April 10, Abdus Sobhan Golap, office secretary of the AL, said the Olama League was not a front body of the party or a like-minded organisation. So the party does not own the demands of the organisation, he added.

About the Olama League using a floor of the AL central office, Golap said he was not aware of it and he would look into the matter.

AL Joint General Secretary Mahbul Alam Hanif, on the same day, claimed Olama League had no office at the AL headquarters.

"We don't own the organisation. The Awami League does not believe in religious bigotry," he told The Daily Star.

AL publicity affairs secretary Hasan Mahmud at a press conference at the party president's Dhanmondi office on April 13 said Olama League did not have any affiliation with the ruling party.

"Some people introduce themselves as Olama League leaders. Actually, they don't belong to the Awami League. This is not even a like-minded organisation," he had said.

The Daily Star called him on Tuesday for his comment about his presence in Olama League programmes, but he did not pick up the call. His phone was found switched off yesterday evening.

Olama League's documents show that many top leaders of the AL, including Golap, Hanif and Hasan, participated in several programmes of that organisation.

Besides, both Helali and Shariatpuri got invitations from the prime minister's official residence Gono Bhaban

several times and they met AL President Sheikh Hasina.

Talking to The Daily Star, Shariatpuri said they are making their demands both as Olama League leaders and as Muslims.

"The Awami League is being called a party of Hindus and we are trying to erase this image and this is our prime target," he said.

On another query, Shariatpuri said they would seek an appointment with the PM and lodge complaints against the AL leaders speaking against the Olama League.

"If The Awami League doesn't

demands, the party is embarrassed. The Awami League actually does not disown the Olama League," he told The Daily Star at his office on the second floor of the AL headquarters. They were allotted the office in 2012.

"These statements of Awami League leaders are only for the current situation," claimed Helali, who was arrested in 2005 during an anti-government agitation of the AL.

Contacted yesterday, AL religious affairs Secretary Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah insisted the party had no relations with the Olama League whatsoever.

Shibir man found dead

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

The bullet-riddled body of another Jhenidah Shibir activist was found in Chuadanga yesterday morning, 10 days after his "abduction".

Shohanur Islam, 19, an activist of Kaliganj municipality unit of Islami Chhatra Shibir, pro-Jamaat-e-Islami student body, was picked up by four plainclothes men, according to his family members.

Shohanur, son of Mohsin Ali of Ishwarba village in Kaliganj upazila, was a second-year student of Shaheed Nur-Ali College in Kaliganj.

On information, the body of Shohanur was recovered from Chandratola around 9:00am and sent to Chuadanga Sadar Hospital morgue for an autopsy, said Saiful Islam, officer-in-charge of Chuadanga Sadar Police Station.

Shohanur's younger brother Masud Hossain said four men identifying them as DB police officials picked up his brother from Jamtala around 5:00pm on April 10. They were waiting there for their mother who was returning home after receiving treatment in Dhaka.

Unusual surrender

FROM PAGE 1

carrying out drives against cars brought into the country without paying taxes.

The officials have so far seized 11 luxury cars in last couple of months.

In the letter, the car was said to have been brought in from UK in 2011 under carnet facility.

"Carnet de passage is a permission given to foreigners for using their cars, brought in from abroad, inside a country for a specific period of time. Bangladesh stopped issuing this permit in 2014," a customs intelligence official said.

Taxes do not apply to cars brought in with carnet de passage.

Moinul Khan, director general of Customs Intelligence, told The Daily Star, "The letter said the car has been handed over to customs intelligence to comply with the law."

"This car has been used on roads without compliance. The owner preferred anonymity while handing over the car which was found to be not registered."

The letter addressing the DG of Customs Intelligence said, "I am a permanent resident of London for the past 49 years. I have been working in Bangladesh as a foreign investor for a long time."

"I brought this Lexus car under Carnet De passage facility for my personal use. I thought I could renew the permit as a foreign investor. But I did not get any assistance from the government in this regard."

"Hence, the tax and duty money for this vehicle went out of my hands. I could not pay them. I did not send the vehicle back and did not use it since its permit expired."

"I am surrendering my vehicle to you out of respect for law. Soon, I will bring all documents and receipts related to this car from London and hand it over to you."

The letter read, "I firmly believe I will get all necessary assistance from the government and will not face any harassment."

"Now, I humbly request you to let me know the accurate sum I need to pay to clear the pending tax. I am also requesting the government's assistance in this regard."

Breaching of polls rules, violence on

1 killed; third phase of UP polls Saturday

STAR REPORT

Breaching of electoral code of conduct and spates of violence continue in different districts, leaving one person dead, as the third phase of Union Parishad (UP) polls starts on day after tomorrow.

A member aspirant of Prahladpur UP under Sreepur upazila in Gazipur was killed on Tuesday night, bringing the death toll to 37 in violence over the polls across the country so far.

Besides, tension prevails at Dimla upazila of Nilphamari as ruling Awami League (AL) and main opposition Jatiya party (JP) men are at loggerheads over elections to seven UPs.

BNP men in Chittagong have meanwhile alleged that AL men were obstructing their candidates in 15 UPs in Fatikchhari upazila.

In Bogra and Munshiganj, candidates and their supporters have kept violating the electoral code of conduct.

Elections to 621 UPs are scheduled for April 23 in the third phase, while 743 UPs will go on polls on May 7 in the fourth phase and around 1,400 more UPs in two other phases until June.

Earlier, polls to 1,364 UP were held in two phases on March 22 and March 31. Both the phases witnessed widespread violence and irregularities that left at least 35 people dead and more than 1,000 wounded.

In Gazipur, member aspirant AL leader Akhter Khandaker, 45, was hacked to death around 10:00pm on Tuesday, reports our correspondent.

Police and witnesses said Akhter was returning to his house on a motorcycle when miscreants stopped him, indiscriminately chopped him and left him dead on the spot.

The police recovered his body around 12:00am and sent it to Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmed Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsy, said Asaduzzaman, officer-in-charge (OC) of Sreepur police.

Victim's cousin Abdul Baten alleged rival member aspirant Mujibur Rahman had been threatening Akhter for last couple of days. He also accused Mujibur of being involved in the killing. Mujibur denied the allegations and said his rivals were hatching conspiracy against him.

In Chittagong, Fatikchhari upazila unit BNP convener at a press conference yesterday alleged that AL men were threatening their candidates and obstructing them from electioneering.

In Nilphamari, tension prevails at Dimla upazila as AL and JP come face to face over elections to seven UPs. Both groups are verbally attacking each other, triggering fears among locals of deadly clashes anytime, reports our correspondent.

In Bogra, a mobile court fined two chairman aspirants of Gosaibari UP under Dhunat upazila.

In Munshiganj, allegations are raised against a member aspirant of Haldia UP under Louhajang upazila that he is running campaign with live 'hen', his election symbol, violating the electoral code.

NINE MUNICIPALITIES

The Election Commission yesterday announced polls schedule to nine municipalities in seven districts setting the voting date on May 25.

The municipalities are Raipur and Palash of Narsingdi, Lakshmipur, Kashba of Brahmanbaria, Maijdee and Senbagh of Noakhali, Chhagalnaiyya of Feni, Teknaf of Cox's Bazar and Ramgar of Khagrachhari.



The office of Olama League on the 2nd floor of Awami League headquarters on Bangabandhu Avenue in the capital.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

support me, why did the prime minister send me to Saudi Arabia to perform Hajj and made me a Kazi [marriage registrar] and invited me to several programmes."

Shariatpuri also said he was discharging duties on the directives of the AL high-command.

Accusing his rival, who according to him comes from a family of "war criminals", he said Helali was an "illiterate man" and had no right to be a part of the Olama League.

Helali, on the other hand, said he was very much against Shariatpuri's demands.

Labelling Shariatpuri as a "paid agent" of Jamaat-e-Islami, he said, "What Shariatpuri is doing is nothing but implementing the agenda of Jamaat."

He claimed his organisation was very much affiliated with the AL.

"But because of Shariatpuri's