

# Who will now run the music school?

ANWAR ALI, Rajshahi

The fate of the music school that slain Prof AFM Rezaul Karim Siddiquee had endeavoured to give an institutional structure has become uncertain.

Locals of Dargamaria said the school was the lone source of entertainment for music lovers in the area and the neighbouring villages.

Who would run the school as its main entrepreneur is gone, many of them asked.

"It would be difficult for the school to sustain as there is no one to look after it," said Riasat Imtiaz Sourav, Prof Rezaul's son.

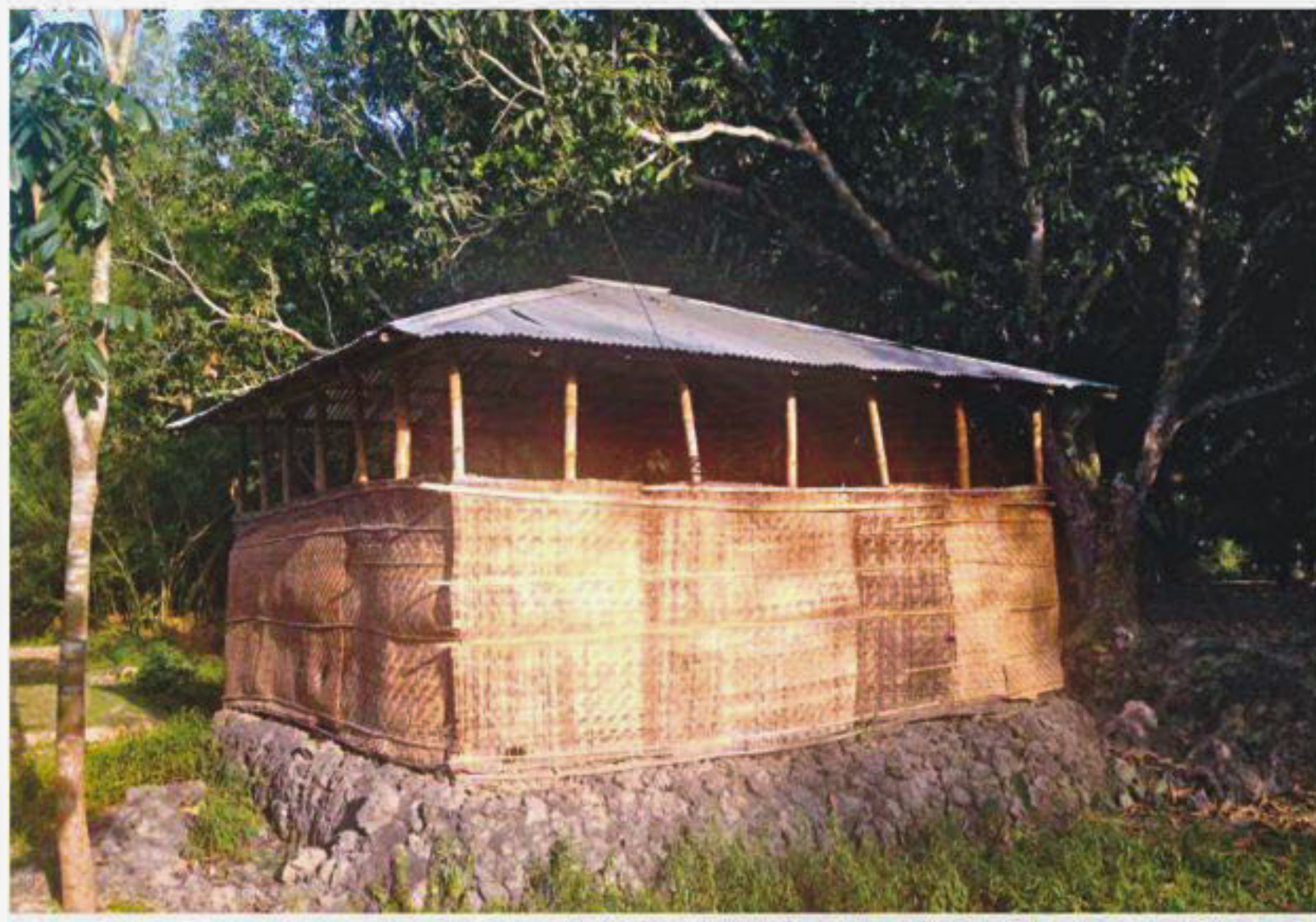
Although we did not get any time to think about the school, my grandparents, who are there in the village, would decide on the matter, he said.

Prof Rezaul's brother Sazedul Karim Siddiquee said, "The main man behind the school is gone, now the villagers together can run it."

Except for Shilpakala Academy in Bagmara upazila headquarters, there is no other music school in the upazila. Another institution named Premiere Academy is there but it remains closed most of the time.

Around one and a half years ago, Prof Rezaul, who used to play the sitar, organised a meeting with more than 50 villagers and decided to set up the music school there after taking their opinions, said Zahrool Islam.

Zahrool, a teacher of Peerganj Karigori BM College and president of the music school committee, said Prof



The music school built by slain Rajshahi University Prof Rezaul Karim Siddiquee at his village Dargamaria in Bagmara upazila. The fate of the school now hangs in the balance.

PHOTO: STAR

Rezaul donated a portion of his land for the school and built a tin-roofed school house.

Prof Rezaul also bought a harmonium, dugi-tabla, and employed a music teacher at Tk 1,000 per month. Electricity connection was also taken for the school and Prof Rezaul regularly paid the bills, he added.

The villagers showed huge enthusiasm for the school in the beginning, but mysteriously, the number of students started to dwindle in the following months, said Ibrahim Ali Sardar,

the music teacher of the school.

Ibrahim, also a teacher of Basupara Government Primary School, said he began with around 30 students in August or September of 2015. Then the number came down to 15. "And when the number fell to 3 or 4, I talked to him [Rezaul] and he asked me to continue," he said.

Prof Rezaul used to go to the neighbouring villages for students for the school after he failed to get enough students from his own village, he said.

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## Bring culprits to book thru' swift probe

EU, 3 countries urge govt over latest spate of killings

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Calling for swift investigations into the recent murders and bringing the culprits to justice, the European Union and three more countries have urged the Bangladesh government to ensure freedom of expression as a fundamental human right.

They have also called upon the government to ensure the protection and safety of lives of all citizens.

The calls have been made amid a series of killings and attacks on online, cultural, rights activists and members of civil society and religious minorities in the country.

The EU, France, Australia and Switzerland have joined other countries in condemning the recent killings, especially the murders of Xulhaz Mannan, a locally-hired employee of the US embassy in Dhaka, and his friend Mahbub Tonoy, and Rajshahi University Prof Rezaul Karim Siddiquee.

France and Australia say they stand by Bangladesh, as they stand by other international partners, in the fight against terrorism and opposing intolerance and violent extremism.

They have also expressed their deepest condolences to the victim families and wished the injured a quick recovery.

In a statement yesterday, the EU said it expected the Bangladesh government to ensure freedom of expression as a fundamental human right and to promote respect.

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## US with Bangladesh in fight against terror

Says Bernicat; 'killers here think they can get away with it'

STAR REPORT

US Ambassador in Dhaka Marcia Bernicat has said what have been happening in Bangladesh are not its "characteristics" at all.

The country has a long tradition of tolerance, free speech and certainly a diversity of religions and cultures, she told CNN in an interview yesterday.

The US television channel talked to Bernicat via Skype to know her reactions to Monday's killings of USAID official and LGBT magazine editor Xulhaz Mannan and his friend Khandaker Mahbub Rabbi Tonoy.

She said the violent ideology of the attackers has created "fear" among people, reports UNB.

Responding to a query, the envoy told CNN that Bangladesh has been a very strong partner in the fight against terrorism.

She appreciated Bangladesh government's efforts in this regard.

"This is a government that has a track record of successfully fighting terrorism in the past. It is led by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina who has said on numerous occasions that terrorism knows no religion and no boundary," Bernicat said, adding that Bangladesh government shows zero tolerance to any form of terrorism.

Asked about reported hit lists not just



Marcia Bernicat

in Bangladesh, but even in Europe and America, the US ambassador said, "That's exactly correct. There have been numerous hit lists published in Bangladesh over the last year."

She said they are working "diligently" with the government civil society and the

media to help strengthen Bangladesh in its fight against terrorism.

Asked what the US expects Bangladesh to do in addressing the issue, the envoy said, "We expect the government and everyone to speak out forcefully to condemn these acts of violence."

The questioner from the CNN newsroom asked Bernicat whether the claims of terrorist groups appear to be authentic to her.

In response, she said they have tracked 35 similar attacks in the last 14 months and 23 of those attacks have been claimed by terrorist groups.

Earlier in the day, the US ambassador told reporters that an environment is prevailing in Bangladesh where they [killers] think they can get away with murders.

"I want to say to you all today that no human being deserves the death he got. It doesn't matter what you believe; it doesn't matter what you write; it doesn't matter who you love; and it

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## Another victim of Kushtia stabbing dies

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

A man, who was hacked at Fakirabad village in Bheramara on Monday night, died at Rajshahi Medical College Hospital early yesterday.

The dead is Mizanur Rahman, 58. His elder brother, Mojibor Rahman, 65, a retired headmaster of a primary school, was killed on the spot in the same attack.

Police suspect that the attack was carried out as the brothers had protested the stalking of their granddaughter, a class VIII student at a local school.

According to police, one Ariful Islam, son of late Ayub Malitha, stalked the girl frequently.

Failing to stop Ariful despite repeated attempts, Mojibor informed the elderly people in his area about the matter. A village arbitration was held on April 21 but it was not proved fruitful.

On April 24, Mojibor filed a written complaint over the matter to the upazila nirbahi officer which angered the stalker, said police.

Around 8:45pm that night, a group of seven to eight criminals swooped on the siblings soon after they came out of a local mosque after Esha prayers.

The criminals hacked them indiscriminately with sharp weapons and left, killing Mojibor on the spot and injuring Mizanur critically.

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## Hoping against hope

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a Comilla court ordered exhumation of the body for a second autopsy.

Police on March 30 exhumed the body, with various law enforcement agencies struggling to identify a single suspect in her murder.

Talking to the BBC Bangla later that day, the police superintendent of Comilla said Tonu might have been raped before being killed.

"Considering the circumstantial evidence and symptoms found on the body, it seems Tonu was raped."

A three-member board led by Kamoda Prosad Saha, head of forensic medicine department at Comilla Medical College, conducted the second autopsy later on March 30. Its report is yet to be prepared.

Experts think that no evidence of rape would now be found even if the crime had been committed.

"It is almost impossible to detect rape signs on a decomposed body and after 10 days of the burial," said a forensic doctor, preferring anonymity. "Even if there was rape evidence, it was damaged during the first autopsy and when the body was given a bath for the first burial."

He, however, said the cause of death can be determined by examining even a decomposed body and suggested that it should have been done at a medical college with more experts and better facilities.

The killing of Sohagi Jahan Tonu, a student of Comilla Victoria College and a member of the college theatre,

sparked widespread protests across the country.

So far, the investigators recorded statements of over 50 people, including parents of Tonu and her relatives and friends in phases.

No arrest has been made; nothing is known about the motive.

One of the main reasons behind no visible progress in the investigation could be that it was mishandled from the beginning.

The Rapid Action Battalion took away earth and grass from the crime scene, though it was never officially assigned to probe the murder. The case has been transferred to the CID from the Detective Branch of Comilla police.

"A spot visit might give an impression that some evidence might have been tampered with," said National Human Rights Commission Chairman Dr Mizanur Rahman on March 31.

The spot, where Tonu's body had been found, looked unusually clean, he told journalists after visiting the spot.

Contacted by The Daily Star, Col Ziaul Ahsan, additional director general (operations) of Rapid Action Battalion, confirmed that the elite force dug up the spot for collecting soil.

"There is nothing wrong in collecting evidence from a place where a crime has taken place and police have not yet cordoned off the area," said Ziaul Ahsan.

Besides, according to court records, some other agencies collected some pieces of evidence that were later submitted to the investigators.

The evidence, which include vaginal swab, shreds of Tonu's clothes, four of her teeth and a pair of male shoes, was sent to the CID's forensic lab in the capital's Malibagh late last month. The report is yet to be made public.

Talking about the inquest report, Tonu's father Yaar Hossain said a sub-inspector prepared it at will.

On the fateful night, upon finding his daughter around 10:30pm, he took her to the Combined Military Hospital in Comilla with the help of some others. Tonu went missing after giving tuition at two cantonment houses in the evening.

According to the death certificate issued by the CMH, she was brought in dead.

Around 2:00am on March 21, Saiful Islam of Cantonment Police Outpost in Comilla prepared the inquest report at the emergency unit of the CMH before sending the body to Comilla Medical College morgue for autopsy.

This newspaper obtained a copy of the inquest report, which bears signatures of six witnesses, including the victim's father, mother Anwara Begum and brother Anwar Hossain.

Tonu's father also alleged that SI Saiful took their signatures before writing anything on that paper.

AUTOPSY PUZZLE

Experts believe conducting a fresh

autopsy in the same medical college might not yield a different result. It should have been done at Dhaka Medical College (DMC), which has better facilities and experts.

There are instances where a second autopsy done at the DMC found murder evidence after the first autopsy elsewhere had failed to do so.

In 2011, 15-year-old rape victim Hena was whipped to death following village arbitration in Noria upazila of Shariatpur. She was "punished" for "extra-marital affairs" with a youth, who was in fact the rapist.

Like the Tonu murder case, police inquest and first autopsy in Shariatpur found no injury marks on her body. People of the area outright rejected the findings.

About 26 days after Hena's burial, forensic doctors at Dhaka Medical College in the second autopsy found that the body bore numerous marks of torture, establishing the gruesome murder.

Talking to The Daily Star, the forensic doctor who conducted Hena's second autopsy said lack of expertise of the then Shariatpur doctors might be one of the reasons for their failure.

"The same thing might have happened in the case of Tonu," he said.

Another forensic doctor said, "The exhumed body of Tonu should have been sent to Dhaka Medical College for the second autopsy."

Tonu's father Yaar Hossain told The Daily Star a couple of days ago, "We

find no hope that doctors will determine the cause of Tonu's death in the second autopsy as it was their colleague who failed to do it in the first one."

He said, "Amar Ma [my daughter] was dumped in a bush after being killed brutally. The back of her head was smashed and there was injury in her nose. How come they could not find the cause of her death?"

Despondent, Tonu's mother Anwara asked, "So, is this how days will go by and killers will remain untraced? How long will it take?"

## Killings aimed

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killings of eight people of a family in Ohio, USA.

'LAW AND ORDER NORMAL'

Speaking in parliament, Hasina yesterday said people are getting justice and as a result the local and foreign citizens are leading their lives and doing businesses normally and peacefully in the country, reports The Daily Star correspondent.

"Foreign investment is on the rise, the country is moving forward and the base of the country's economy is getting stronger as its law and order situation is normal," she told the Jatiya Sangshad.

She stated that it was possible for the government to control terrorism and militancy in the country due to the initiatives taken by law enforcement agencies.

## Yet another fire in Sundarbans

Cause not clear

A CORRESPONDENT, Bagerhat

Yet another fire broke out in Chandpai range of the Sundarbans in Bagerhat's Sharankhola upazila yesterday.

This was the fourth incident of fire in the area in the last one month.

Forest officials of Dhansagar station noticed smoke in Tulatola area around 4:45pm, said Belayet Hossain, assistant conservator of forest (Chandpai range).

On information, three fire service units from Bagerhat town, Sharankhola and Morelganj rushed to the spot.

The cause of the fire could not be immediately known.

Around 9:00pm, Manikuzzaman, deputy assistant director of the fire service unit in Bagerhat, said they were not sure how far the fire had spread.

Fire service officials said they might need to work throughout the night to douse the flames completely.

A three-member committee, led by Belayet Hossain, was formed to investigate the incident, said Zahir Uddin, conservator of the forest.

Fire had also broken out in Shikdarbari and Abdullar Chhila, Panchakuria and Napitkhali areas under Nagli camp of Dhansagar station on March 27, April 13 and April 18, destroying forest on around 20 acres of land.

## 'Killers left a list of targets'

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bullets, among other things, according to investigators.

Quoting the documents, a top DB official said any individual atheist or LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual transgender) is not their target. Rather those who promote such a cause will be their target.

Xulhaz, a USAID local staff member and also editor of the country's only known LGBT magazine Roopbaan, and his friend Khandaker Mahbub Rabbi Tonoy were killed by a group of unidentified assailants armed with machetes and firearms inside Xulhaz's Kalabagan apartment on Monday afternoon.

The Detective Branch of police has been given the charge of probing the killings.

As part of the probe, investigators have started scrutinising the CCTV footage collected from nearby build-

ings and other evidence found so far.

"We're giving more focus on ABT [Ansarullah Bangla Team] as the nature of the attack suggests its involvement in the killings," said the official, asking not to be named, citing ongoing investigation.

Meanwhile, Dhaka Metropolitan Police Commissioner Asaduzzaman Mia yesterday said they would be able to crack this murder case.

He claimed regular crimes like theft, robbery and mugging were under control.

"I don't want to term it a failure [that police could not catch any of the assailants while fleeing]. But it is pathetic that none of the hundreds of people came forward to stop the killers," he said while describing how the killers fled after injuring a police sub-inspector.

Some misguided youths are trying

to create instability in the country for long through such targeted killings, he said, calling on the city dwellers to provide information about any suspicious tenants.

Parvez Mollah, security guard of the building, said seven youths took part in the mission. They were clean shaven and wore identical clothes.

Four of them entered Xulhaz's flat on the first floor posing as couriers and directly took part in the killings.

Three others took position at the gate. They took Parvez, another guard and the caretaker of the house hostage inside a ground floor room, Parvez told reporters yesterday.

Four youths then followed Parvez to Xulhaz's flat, forced into it and hacked Xulhaz and Tonoy to death.

Before that, they stabbed Parvez when he tried to stop them from entering the house.

## Govt moves to boost harmony

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"Earlier we held such programmes with only Muslim clerics in upazila and district levels. Now we will continue these types of programmes in all divisional cities with participants of all religions," he said.

In late last year, police headquarters held a number of views-exchange meetings with the country's alems and ulemas to curb militancy.

Back then, the events were over security concerns and probable rise of

militancy in the country.

"We, the Bangladeshis, are pious but not religious bigots. No religion allows killing or burning people," the minister said, adding, "We will protest the killings from one place."

The participants will also discuss about not hurting each others' religious sentiments and beliefs, the minister said.

Police sources said about 1,000 leaders of different religious communities are expected to attend today's

event.

Of them, about 600 would be from the Muslim community, including 40 to 50 shia leaders, about 200 from the Hindu community and about 100 each from the Buddhist and Christian communities, they added.

The home minister is expected to be present as chief guest while Inspector General of Police AKM Shahidul Hoque will preside over the event.

## RU PROF MURDER

# Cops claim to have got vital information

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Police yesterday claimed to have important information regarding the killers of Rajshahi University teacher Rezaul Karim Siddiquee.

They expressed optimism that they would soon be able to make significant progress in probing the murder case.

Commissioner Muhammad Shamsuddin of Rajshahi Metropolitan Police (RMP) said three youths took part in the killing of the 58-year-old professor of English.

Two of them carried a machete and a big knife. The other sped off with the two on a motorbike after committing the murder in a minute or two, the RMP chief told The Daily Star.

Quoting witnesses and the post mortem report, he said the killers first hit Rezaul in his neck from behind and then slit the teacher's throat to confirm his death.

Seeking anonymity, a top RMP official quoting witnesses said the killers shouted "Allahu Akbar" during the killing. "We are trying to identify the killers. We've reliable information about the physical appearance of the killers."

Ten police teams have been probing the murder case while a six-member police team, led by the additional commissioner of RMP, is monitoring

the investigation, he added.

Cops said they quizzed a cross-section of people, including the victim's family members, his fellow villagers, RU teachers and students and traders of the crime scene, regarding the murder.

Prof Rezaul was hacked to death near his Shalbagan home in Rajshahi city around 7:40am on April 23 when he was on his way to the campus.

His son Riasat Imtiaz Shourav filed a murder case with Boalia Police Station on the same day, accusing unnamed people of the murder.

The Detective Branch of Rajshahi police is probing the case. It has so far detained three people for interrogation.

The three are RU Shibir leader Hafijur Rahman, a second year student of public administration; RU student Khairul Islam and Raihan Ali, imam of a mosque at Dargamaria village.

Police, however, released madrasa teacher Mansur Rahman, who was detained at Khazapara village of Bagmara, said DB sources.

PROTEST CONTINUES

Rajshahi University students continued their demonstrations yesterday, demanding immediate arrest of the killers of Prof Rezaul. Hundreds of students brought out a silent procession on the campus.

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