



The very sight of a truck laden with iron rods like this can send shivers down the spine of motorists and pedestrians.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

Daredevils in Dhaka

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Just the other day a truck laden with iron rods was lumbering ahead of us, as we were heading home in the middle of the night after work. The entire journey was freaking me out. I held my 15-month-old son tight against my chest.

Those thin, long, sharp objects were pointed at us and I was imagining throughout that anytime they would get loose and fling towards us. Farther up the road, we sped past the truck and I could breathe normally.

Such a scene is not unusual in a nighttime Dhaka. Every time I come across a truck full of heavy or sharp objects thus exposed, I foresee the danger we might get into. But then I calm myself remembering a prophecy from an astrologer that I would live long and won't die until all my teeth came off.

Though I have not yet lost any, nighttime travel in the city challenges my trust in that fortuneteller when I see devils lurking in every corner.

Often people get stuck in knots of vehicles coming in each other's way at intersections in the absence of traffic police. Then a courageous man -- a "messiah" -- from among them steps in and helps others out of the deadlock.

Dhaka during the day is no

less adventurous. It is just that we all are supermen and women who brush aside all the "threats" life in Dhaka is tied to and move on.

In the morning when vehicles vie for getting past one another, guardians jaywalk across the roads grabbing school-goers by their arms as if they are in a "slow-forward" motion watching the world running by. Buses, rickshaws, bikes, cycles and



humans all moving in their own rhythm but rarely bumping into each other; ours must be the world's best drivers.

Another thing that amazes me is people's sheer belief in luck. I guess the motorcycle inventor introduced the pillion behind the driving seat for one person only. But never mind if you see three, even four, pillion

passengers on one bike. What a bonding! They want to be together at all times and face everything together.

How reckless it is when parents ride on a motorcycle with one toddler and an infant in the mother's arms. Once I felt like calling out a mother to hold her toddler tight as the kid fell asleep with his head leaning downward. But then I thought the better of it. My calling her out would draw the biker's attention, and may result in an accident. So I found myself praying instead that they reach their destination safe.

Youths, irrespective of their familial status, enjoy an even higher scale of adrenaline rush in Dhaka. Since they are the muscle power of our political parties, rules violators and illegal grabbers, they feel they are "on top of the city". As they leave their political rallies, they run through the middle of the road, shout, chase each other on foot or motorbike and take selfies on flyovers that do not even have any pavement. Often one feels pity for them.

But the kids of the rich who, just to push the needle of the speedometer, drive their luxury vehicles with utter disregard to others' safety, deserve sympathy.

HUMILIATION OF TEACHER

N'ganj cops seek 2 months for submitting reports

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Narayanganj police have sought two months' time from the High Court for submitting reports on the incident of public humiliation of school-teacher Shyamal Kanti Bhakta.

The superintendent of police in Narayanganj and the officer-in-charge of Bandar police yesterday sent separate applications to the attorney general's office to that end, Deputy Attorney General Motaher Hossain Sazu told The Daily Star.

He added the deputy commissioner of Narayanganj has also sent a report to the attorney general's office for placing it to the HC, expressing regrets for not making a detailed report over the incident earlier.

In the report, the deputy commissioner said two law and order protection committees have decided to take steps so that the law and order centring the humiliation of Shyamal does not deteriorate further.

The committees have held two meetings for maintaining law and order in the area, DAG Sazu said, adding that he would submit the applications of the police and the report of the DC before the HC today.

He further said the SP and the OC sought time from the HC saying that investigation into the incident was still going on.

The HC bench of Justice Moyeenul Islam Chowdhury and Justice Md Iqbal Kabir is set to pass an order on the issue today.

During hearing of a suomoto rule on May 29, the HC bench ordered the DC and the SP of Narayanganj and the OC of Bandar police to submit separate detailed reports specifying the steps taken against those involved in humiliating Shyamal to this court today.

The bench the same day also expressed dissatisfaction over their earlier reports, saying the reports submitted by the DC, the SP and the OC were not prepared in line with the rule and order.

On May 13, AKM Salim Osman, Jatiya Party lawmaker from Narayanganj-5 constituency, was seen instructing Bhakta to do squats holding his ears. Before that, Shyamal was beaten up by a mob.

On May 18, the HC bench issued the suomoto rule asking the authorities concerned to explain as to why they should not be directed to take necessary legal actions against local lawmaker Salim Osman and others, who were involved in humiliating Shyamal Kanti Bhakta.

The court also directed the DC, the SP and the OC to submit separate reports on steps taken against the

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The water saver

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Irrigated-rice Boro contributes 55 percent of Bangladesh's nearly 35 million tonnes of yearly rice output and heavily sucks on a rapidly depleting groundwater.

Professor Moshir Rahman, who teaches agronomy at Bangladesh Agricultural University (BAU) in Mymensingh, negated the notion that rice in dry season has to grow in puddle condition, soaked field and in standing water.

Moshir wanted to challenge the notion and began with an on-campus experiment back in 2006-07. In the last 10 years, Moshir reached out to plots of many farmers in six rice-rich districts, and today he is ready to show the results -- rice can be grown using less than half the irrigation water in Boro season.

"What we'll do, we'll not grow seedlings in the nursery and we'll save water there. We'll directly sow in the dry field by ploughing furrows and no

overexploitation of groundwater in irrigation and has long been on the lookout for alternatives, felt relieved at the initial news of Moshir and his team's success in developing water-conserving Boro production technology.

The MoA has now showed a great deal of interest in listening to Prof Moshir and to give the direct-seeded technology a try. Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury would be listening to him, as Moshir has been invited to give a presentation on the water-saving rice production technology before a scientific audience in the city today.

As this correspondent met the BAU professor yesterday, Moshir asserted if a large part of the country's nearly five million hectares of Boro land is brought under the direct-seeded rice cultivation system, it would save a lot of water, an overwhelming 90 percent of which are now drawn from the fast-depleting groundwater.



Production Technology	Water Use (per hectare)	Diesel Use (per hectare)
Conventional Puddle Transplanted Rice	14 million litres	250 litres
Dry Direct-seeded Rice	7 million litres	125 litres

need to puddle or soak the field with water, thereby save some water as well. We'll only keep standing water in the paddy field during the period between panicle initiation and grain-filling and that's it," Moshir, who received a doctorate from New Zealand's Lincoln University, explained to The Daily Star.

In the direct-seeded Boro rice technology, Prof Moshir said, what farmers would require to do is keeping the seeds soaked in water for 24 hours and then incubate the soaked seeds for another 30 to 40 hours prior to sowing in the paddy field.

From the results of his experiments with the direct-seeded rice technology in Rajshahi, Rangpur, Dinajpur, Tangail, Netrokona and Mymensingh over the last 10 years, Moshir showed statistical evidence that in the most conservative estimate, 50 percent less water was required for growing rice with equally productive yield.

The Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), which has been under pressure for

"It's going to be a great cost-saver too. Over 1.6 million privately-operated shallow tube wells as well as some public sector-run deep tube wells together consume 10 million litres of diesel and a 1,000 megawatts of electricity a day during peak Boro season. We can expect straightaway halving the volume of diesel and power consumption for irrigation purpose," hoped Prof Moshir.

Around 88 percent of total fresh water is used for agriculture in the country and rice production accounts for 73 percent of that water. The UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) stated in a report, "In some parts of the country, particularly the Barind Tracts in the northwest region, there are already symptoms of deterioration in the natural hydrological regime. Declining groundwater levels have affected water quality causing it to affect soils, the growth of agricultural crops, flora and fauna and to increase health hazards."

Arsonists turn into secret killers

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were working to track them down, Hasina told a press conference at the Gono Bhaban in the afternoon.

It was held to brief journalists about the outcome of her recent visits to Bulgaria, Japan and Saudi Arab.

Earlier in the morning, the PM made similar remarks in parliament. The BNP refuted the allegations. Its Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir claimed Hasina's statements were meant to cover up the real incidents and harass his party men.

Jamaat leaders could not be reached for comments.

At the press conference, Hasina said the nature of the killings and the identities of those arrested so far substantiate that the assailants had links with the two parties.

The reason behind the secret killings is to create a wave of tension globally to depict Bangladesh negatively and to create panic among people, Hasina said.

"Those who tried to destroy the image of Bangladesh and block its advancements are behind this," she said, dismissing the claim of a section of people that the government statements accusing the BNP and its ally Jamaat for these killings were politically motivated.

Over the last two years or so, suspected militants have attacked and killed university professors, writers, publishers, secular bloggers, gay rights activists, foreigners, policemen and members of religious minorities, including Shia and Sufi Muslims, Christians and Hindus.

At least seven people have fallen victim to such target killings since May 1 alone. They include the wife of a police superintendent, a Christian trader and a Hindu priest.

Reportedly, terror group Islamic State claimed responsibilities for many of the past attacks. But the government maintains the group has no presence in the country, and squarely blames the opposition parties for those.

The PM said those who found no BNP-Jamaat link with these secret killings were in fact out to save militants and encourage their activities. She asked

the people only to look back to see what the two parties did in the past.

"Our stance on it [killings] is very tough. The government is not sitting idle. We are doing whatever is necessary."

Hasina, also president of the ruling Awami League, said law enforcement agencies already arrested the culprits involved in some of the recent killings, and the rest would surely be nabbed.

She noted those who killed people in the name of Islam never actually believed in Islam. "Islam is the religion of peace. Allah is the sole authority for the last judgement."

World leaders at the G-7 Outreach Meeting as well as the leaders of the three countries she visited recently praised Bangladesh's unequivocal role

able to us."

Replying to a question, Hasina said the diplomatic ties with Pakistan will remain. "I never believe in snapping all sorts of relations with another country."

Of late, different quarters have intensified their call to cut ties with Pakistan in the wake of its reactions to the war crimes trial.

About Islamabad's concern over the trial and the execution of some top war criminals, the PM said it only proved they were Pakistan's agents during the war. "WON'T SPARE THEIR MASTERS" Earlier in parliament, Hasina said if the killers were planning to bring about a massive change in the country through these secret killings, they were wrong and that their dream would never come true.

Those who carried out arson attacks in the name of movement in 2013, 2014 and the first three months of 2015 are now engaged in target killings, she added.

"We won't spare their masters whoever they are. They'll be awarded the toughest and highest punishment," she warned.

Turning to SP Babul Akhter, whose wife was stabbed and shot to death in Chittagong on Sunday, Hasina said this police officer was engaged in containing terrorism skillfully.

"His wife was brutally chopped and shot dead in broad daylight in front of their child. I would like to say one thing that the style of these secret killings was the same."

She added, "Once a blow comes from their [killers] side on the family members of the other side [law enforcers], then blow comes from the other side, too. How can they [killers] forget this?"

BD-KSA ALLIANCE

About the association of Bangladesh with the Saudi initiative of forging a security alliance, she said it was aimed at protecting the Muslim world from militancy and terrorism. So far 40 countries have joined it.

"I have assured the Saudi King of Bangladesh's steadfast stance to cooperate with any initiative against terrorism and militancy and extend all support, including military assistance, to ensure protection of the two holy mosques of the Muslims."

Govt has evidences of BNP-Jamaat link with recent killings

Law enforcers are active to nab killers

Diplomatic ties with Pakistan to remain

Secret killings is aimed to tarnish country's image

Militants are militants, they won't get any mercy

Urges people to cooperate law enforcers to find out killers

against terrorism and militancy, she said. "But some of our people misguide their ambassadors in Dhaka to explain the situation differently."

'SURELY, I'VE INFORMATION'

Asked if the BNP-Jamaat was being blamed to save the real culprits, Hasina said, "Surely, I have information when I talk about it. I cannot share all the information for the sake of investigation."

About the death toll (some 127) in the recently concluded UP polls violence, reportedly the deadliest to date, the PM said killings during elections were nothing new. "What happened this time is surely not accept-

Farashuddin wants

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In its final report submitted to the finance minister on May 30, the probe body mentioned the names of the government agencies that should carry out further investigation into the matter.

Farashuddin, however, didn't say the number or positions of the suspected BB officials whose names were mentioned in the report.

He maintained his stance that both SWIFT and the New York Fed were responsible for the theft.

"In the final report, we have been able to establish that SWIFT is mainly responsible for the theft. At the same time, the New York Fed is no less responsible. We have evidence."

Following the theft, the Belgium-based SWIFT and the New York Fed came under huge pressure. The two, however, refuted the claims that their systems were breached during the heist that took place on February 4.

Farashuddin blamed five SWIFT officials who established the link between the SWIFT platform at the BB and the real time gross settlement (RTGS).

"This is not a secret. The main problem lay with the linking of the RTGS and the SWIFT platform. It was completely a foolish step. There was no point in doing that."

The RTGS deals with local transactions whereas the SWIFT platform has been used for Bangladesh's international transactions since 1995, he said.

"Why should we link the two?" By linking the two, they had created a local area network of more than 5,000 computers and the defence was gone, he said.

"It was done at the instructions of the SWIFT people. They even had not explained to the BB officials how the system works."

Farashuddin said SWIFT couldn't provide any document for the transactions carried out through the BB's SWIFT platform from February 5 and March 16. "They don't have any record of the transactions."

Bangladesh has to recover the stolen

money by working together with the New York Fed and SWIFT, instead of suing them, he added.

According to the probe report, at least \$54 million of the \$81 million that ended up in the Philippines could be recovered.

Filipino remittance company Philrem is now holding \$17 million and casino junket operator Kim Wong around \$37 million.

"We have to move more vigorously to recover the money," Farashuddin said, adding that both the prime minister and the finance minister were serious about the issue.

Officials said Finance Minister AMA Muhith would give a statement in parliament on the matter in the middle of the month.

Farashuddin said the cyber theft caused a lot of damage to the BB but it also acted as a warning to the country.

According to the report, in order to ensure the country's cyber security, regulations surveillance should be put in place before launching an IT system.

Farashuddin noted that if the probe body's recommendations for the banking sector are implemented, a strong IT system would be established in the sector.

The probe team suggested that the BB governor would hold office for only one term of six years, and his tenure would not be extended.

The probe body also proposed raising the status of the governor to that of the state minister just like the chief of the Anti-Corruption Commission or the Election Commission under the warrant of precedence.

It recommended that the BB be strengthened, and the central bank, not the Banking Division, would supervise all state banks. The Division would oversee only the insurance companies and other financial institutions.

"There is no point in keeping the state banks under the Division," said Farashuddin.

The report recommended privatisation of all state banks, except for Sonali Bank.

No arrest yet

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their condolence to the bereaved family.

They are First Secretary (political and information) Rajesh Uike and First Secretary (consular) Ramakant Gupta.

Ananda's widow Shefali Rani and their daughters and sons burst into tears during their visit yesterday.

The family members said the Indian officials assured them of providing financial support.

Superintendent of Police in Jhenidah Altaf Hossain, Bangladesh Hindu-Bouddha-Christian Oikya Parishad Jhenidah unit General Secretary Subir Kumar Samaddar and Bangladesh Pujja Uddjapan Parishad central leader Kanak Kanti Das were present.

Speaking to reporters, SP Altaf Hossain said they have launched several drives to arrest the criminals.

He urged the family members to keep patience, assuring them of providing financial support from the police.

Officer-in-Charge (OC) Hasan Hafizur Rahman of Jhenidah Sadar police said Ananda's son Arun Gopal Ganguly filed a murder case accusing unnamed persons.

Deputy Inspector General (Khulna Range) of Police SM Maniuzzaman, who visited Ananda's family on Tuesday afternoon, said militants might have been involved.

Seventy-year-old Ananda was brutally murdered when he was going to a temple in Naldanga union under Sadar upazila on Tuesday morning.

Three attackers on a motorcycle intercepted Ananda, who was on a bicycle, in Sonakhali area, about two kilometres off his house, said police based on witnesses' accounts.

The murder of the Hindu priest came only two days into the gruesome killings of a police official's wife in Chittagong and a Christian grocer in Natore on Sunday.

Hours after the killing of Ananda, global terror outfit Islamic State (IS) claimed responsibility for it, says a post on SITE Intelligence Group, which monitors terror activities globally.