



Left, construction of a drainage system is going on as part of Joydebpur-Mymensingh four-lane project in Bhaluka of Mymensingh. Right, the under-construction Mohipal flyover in Feni on Dhaka-Chittagong highway. The construction work of the flyover is causing long tailbacks at this point, especially at night when there is a rush of trucks and lorries. The photos were taken on Wednesday.



PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN/RASHED SHUMON

## Man beaten to death on 'false allegation'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A man was beaten to death on the campus of Dinajpur Medical College early yesterday, triggering protest.

Police said the man was suspected to have been a thief but his family and neighbours said he was mentally ill and innocent.

The dead Sohel Rana, of Dinajpur Satellite Town area, was a father of two children. His wife, Swapna, is a nurse at a private hospital near the medical college.

Protesting the killing, people from nearby areas blocked the Dinajpur-Dhaka highway in front of the college for about an hour from 11:00am. Police fired tear shells to disperse them and clear the highway.

Quoting locals, police said Sohel went inside the campus during the sehri time yesterday. However, some alleged students caught him suspected him to be a thief and gave him a good beating,

leaving him dead.

On information, police recovered the body and sent it to Dinajpur Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsy.

As the news spread, villagers from nearby areas descended on the highway and blocked it using logs, said police.

Abdur Rahim, a neighbour, said Sohel was innocent and had been having some mental illness for some time. Earlier, he used to run a battery-run three-wheeler to run his family.

Sohel's wife Swapna said she had to manage a nursing job after her husband became ill. He could not sleep at all, she said.

Redwanur Rahim, officer-in-charge of Dinajpur Sadar Police Station, said they were looking into the matter.

This correspondent tried to talk to many students of Dinajpur Medical College but none of them agreed to comment.

The victim family was yet to file a case till last night.

## Celebration turns

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Rahman, who was publisher of the booklet, was suspended following the incident.

The souvenir was also confiscated, and the VC announced withdrawing all the copies.

In an article styled "Smritite Amlan" of the souvenir, Rezaur gave a brief description of the country's brave sons after whose names the dormitories have been named.

Talking about the Zia Hall which was named after Ziaur Rahman, the souvenir reads, "Zia was Bangladesh's first president, a former military chief and valiant freedom fighter."

A speaker at a pre-scheduled discussion on the university day at the TSC brought the issue to everyone's notice, triggering protests by Chhatra League activists.

Rezaur Rahman offered an apology for the incident and claimed: "It was a printing mistake."

But aggrieved BCL leaders and activists confined him in his office for around 40 minutes and set fire to a copy of the souvenir.

Later, around 500 BCL activists started demonstrating in front of the VC's residence demanding resignation of the registrar and the VC.

When the VC was coming to his house by his car, the BCL activists led by its DU unit president Abid Al Hasan and general secretary Motahar Hossain Prince attacked him and vandalised the car with sticks around 2:45pm. Some university teachers and reporters saved him and took him to his residence.

The activists brandished shoes after the VC entered his residence.

The VC signed the letter of suspension for Syed Rezaur Rahman in the afternoon after holding a meeting with university Pro VCs, Pro Awami League Blue panel teachers and police officials.

Later, BCL central committee vice-president Anwar Hossain Anu locked the residence gate of the VC around 5:00pm. BCL activists of its city units, Dhaka College and other institutions also joined at a sit-in from VC's gate and chanted slogans against him.

The DU unit of the BCL gave an ultimatum till 8:00pm for the resignation of the VC and threatened to wage an indefinite strike on the campus if he did not quit.

The VC will have to shoulder the responsibility of the publication, said Abid Al Hasan, president of campus unit of Chhatra League. "He will have to resign by 8:00pm today [yesterday]."

"We will go for indefinite strike on the campus from tomorrow [today] if our demand is not met," he warned.

Around 8:15pm, BCL leaders Saifur, Zakir, Abid and Motahar went inside the residence of the VC. An hour later, they in a press briefing called off their movement following assurance from the VC of taking necessary action against the culprits who, in the annual souvenir book, mentioned Ziaur Rahman as the first president of Bangladesh.

"The registrar has already been suspended and the VC sir told us that an investigation committee is working to find out who were responsible. So we are calling off our movement," said Saifur.

Abid, however, told The Daily Star that the VC did not meet them although they waited for an hour at his residence.

He declined to say anything on Saifur's comment.

**UNPRECEDENTED MISTAKE:** VC

In a press briefing at his official residence on the campus, Arefin Siddique said the mistake in question was "unprecedented" and that "appropriate action" would be taken after investigation.

"There was a great mistake in the annual book. We have withdrawn the publication and suspended its writer acting Registrar Syed Rezaur Rahman," the VC said.

"It was Rezaur's byline publication and so he will be held responsible."

Talking to The Daily Star, the VC alleged that it was an "instigation from a malicious quarter" that led the students to attack his car.

## Lailatul Qadr

FROM PAGE 1

occasion through nightlong special prayers, milad, Quran Khwani and religious discussions at mosques and houses.

Devotees also visit graveyards to seek eternal blessings for the departed souls of their near and dear ones.

Newspapers publish special articles while state-run Bangladesh Betar, Bangladesh Television and private television channels air special programmes, highlighting the significance of Lailatul Qadr.

To the Muslims, the entire month of Ramadan is a period of spiritual training. Besides fasting, they devote themselves to praying, recitation from the holy Quran and charity.

Special prayers and sermons will be held at Baitul Mukarram national mosque and other mosques across the country on the holy night.

The Islamic Foundation will organise a waz mahfil (sermon session) and milad mahfil at Baitul Mukarram at 2:00pm today, said a press release.

## Dream highway stirs new hope

FROM PAGE 1

Talking to The Daily Star, Abul Kalam Azad, former president of Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry, said, "We are happy and excited about the formal inauguration of the four-lane Dhaka-Chittagong highway. We have been waiting for this for a long time."

It would now save both time and

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money, and boost the country's export and import, he added.

Faruque Hassan, senior vice president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), said around 95 percent of the imported and exported goods are transported through the Dhaka-Chittagong highway.

Now, the cost of doing business would come down. The reduction in

	DHAKA-CHITTAGONG	DHAKA-MYMENSINGH
Distance	192km	87km
Project undertaken	2006	2010
Deal signed	2010	2011
Original cost	Tk 1,655cr	Tk 904cr
Revised cost	Tk 3,800cr	Tk 1,815cr
Delay	3.5 years	2.5 years

travel time would cut transportation costs, said Hasan, also managing director of Giant Apparels Ltd in Uttara.

Bangladesh exports readymade garment items worth \$27.5 billion of which more than 75 percent are transported through this vital highway.

"We will not get the full benefit of the highway until slow-moving vehicles are strictly barred from plying the road and enough rail overpasses, flyover and bridges are constructed immediately," he said.

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader said, "The highway will not only contribute to the country's economy but also give comfort to travellers every day."

"Whenever possible, I inspected the highway to ensure that the work is done quickly, as there were a number of obstacles and challenges. I thank those who helped implement this project."

Quader said the construction work

of three four-lane bridges -- Kanchpur, Meghna and Gomti -- has already started with the Japanese government's assistance.

Once these bridges and a flyover in Feni are built, people would get the full benefit of the highway, he added.

### POVERTY REDUCTION

As a major road communication project, this would generate employment in construction and transport sectors, according to the Roads and Highways Department.

It would improve distribution of farm products and enhance poor farmers' accessibility to urban markets. It would also create opportunities for the rural poor and improve the livelihood of day labourers, added the RHD officials.

### VISIT TO HIGHWAY

On Wednesday, a group of correspondents of The Daily Star visited the highway to get a first-hand experience.

Traffic movement on the road was

smooth. But drivers faced some problems, as markings and road signs were yet to be put in place in many parts of the highway.

Md Manju, a truck driver, said he had problems driving on the highway at night, as there were not enough markings and signs on the road.

The speed limit on the highway is 85 kilometres per hour.

Work was still going on in a few parts of the highway. Rail overpasses in Comilla, Feni and Chittagong, and a flyover in Feni's Mohipal were still under construction.

However, the construction of two underpasses, 14 bypasses, 242 culverts, 23 bridges, 61 bus bays and 39 foot-bridges have already been completed.

Even though there were no long tailbacks, vehicles had to stop or slow down at the entrance to the existing two-lane Kanchpur, Meghna and Gomti bridges.

There was traffic jam in some parts of the highway in Feni at night because of the ongoing construction work of the flyover.

Aftab Uddin Khan, director of the four-lane highway project, said the unfinished work such as putting in place road signs and markings would be completed in a month. "But it will take time to complete the construction of the three four-lane bridges, Mohipal flyover and three rail overpasses."

## Terror strikes Dhaka

FROM PAGE 1

Obama was following the situation, reports AFP.

The incident prompted the US, the UK and Australia to issue travel alert for their citizens living in Bangladesh.

The building by the Gulshan lake and on Road 79 houses two restaurants - Holey Artisan Bakery on the ground floor and O Kitchen on the first.

Talking to The Daily Star, Sumon Reza, supervisor of O Kitchen, said he saw seven to eight armed men aged between 20 and 28 inside the restaurant.

"Two of them had arms in their hands while another was carrying a sword," said Sumon, who managed to escape the restaurant through the roof.

At that time, around 20 foreigners and seven to eight Bangladeshis were having dinner, he said, adding that around 40 staff members were at work.

"The gunmen fired blank shots and detonated several crude bombs causing huge panic among those in the restaurant. Some of the diners ducked under the table and some lay on the floor," he said.

"They shouted 'Allahu Akbar' before blasting bombs," he said.

After some time, they held the main chef hostage and fired a shot that grazed his face, leaving him slightly injured.

Amid confusion and horror, seven to eight of the restaurant staffs ran to the roof and managed to escape.

Residents of the area said they heard sounds of gunshots and screams of people from inside the restaurant.

At 10:07pm, a diplomat via SMS told The Daily Star that he could hear gunfire and that the situation looked quite worrisome. "Fire exchanges took place reportedly between police and terrorists..."

He again said at 10:35pm, "My info source said to me that about 20-30 people are there as hostage by 5-6 gun fighters."

He further informed at 12:02am that "Italians and Japanese are there."

Another diplomat at 10:20pm



Rabiul



Salauddin

said, "I heard some 20 foreigners were being held hostage. One Japanese is among them."

"No idea about the exact number of foreigners. We guess there would be 10-20 people," another diplomat said at 12:07am.

A source at the US embassy at 12:44am said, "So far no American is there. Total number could be 20."

Around 11:15pm, Rab Director General Benazir Ahmed talked to the media.

"We are primarily trying to establish contacts with the attackers, who are holding citizens hostage. We have to try to save every hostage... Every life is precious," he said and urged the media not to broadcast the incident live.

"Live broadcast may hamper the operations and endanger public security," he told the journalists present there.

Just then, a RAB bomb disposal team went to the scene that was cordoned off. The force was being strengthened continuously.

Around half an hour later, reliable sources told The Daily Star that police have tried to communicate with the gunmen but failed. Police have yet to know if the hostage-takers have any demand.

Around midnight, a top DMP official was heard making queries while talking to a colleague whether police had gas grenade, sound grenade or hand mine.

Around 2:30am today, it was learnt that Rab was preparing to start a commando operation.

**'THEY WOULD KILL US'**

Mohammad Suhrawardy, whose residence is just by the restaurant and who was somewhere else, said his wife called him around 10:30pm and said all of a sudden she heard gunshots at the restaurant that sank

into the darkness immediately afterwards.

"Then the restaurant gate was closed and there was a hue and cry," he told The Daily Star, quoting his wife as saying.

He said his wife asked him not to come home.

A top official of an engineering firm, his wife and two children remained trapped in the restaurant, his uncle told The Daily Star.

The hostage called his uncle -- first at 10:35pm and the second time at 10:40pm.

"They've held us hostage. If possible, tell police not to fire. They would kill us then," his uncle quoted him as saying, and said he later found his nephew's mobile phone switched off.

Seven to eight students of a private university were also trapped inside the restaurant.

"They were pointing guns at us," the father of one student quoted his daughter as saying.

At least 20 family members of some hostages were seen waiting anxiously at a point near the spot.

One of them said his son came from Canada just yesterday and went to the restaurant to buy food.

"I couldn't communicate with him," said the father.

A huge number of police, Rab and BGB personnel as well as other special forces rushed to the spot by around 9:00pm. They took positions all around the restaurant and also on the roofs of different buildings.

### REACTIONS

The attack comes amid a series of secret killings carried out by suspected militants across the country.

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.

The Islamic State reportedly claimed responsibility for a number of such killings.

After the Gulshan attack, foreign diplomatic sources said they are worried because their citizens and diplomats living in Dhaka never

guessed any such high voltage situation in Bangladesh.

In Washington, State Department spokesman John Kirby told reporters: "We are aware of reports of what appears to a hostage situation in the Gulshan neighbourhood of Dhaka."

He said the department is aware that local security forces are on the scene, responding, and the US Embassy is in constant touch with Bangladeshi authorities concerning what is a "very fluid, very live situation."

Kirby said the embassy has accounted for 100 percent of American citizens that are under the authority of the diplomatic chief of mission in Dhaka. He said he had no more details, reports ABC news.

He said it was too early to say who were involved in the assault and their motivation

In an abrupt decision, the US, UK and Australian governments issued travel alert for their citizens staying in Dhaka asking them to maintain high degree of caution in Bangladesh due to the high threat.

The British government said, "There are reports of a firearms incident in the Gulshan 2 area of Dhaka. The incident may be ongoing. If you are in the area you should remain vigilant and follow the advice of the local security authorities."

The US Embassy in its Facebook and twitter message said at 11:00pm said, "There are reports of a shooting and hostage situation in Gulshan 2, Dhaka. Please shelter in place and monitor the news."

The Australian government told its citizens "If you are in the area, remain vigilant and follow the advice of local authorities. The level of advice has not changed. You should exercise a high degree of caution in Bangladesh."

"We advise you to exercise a high degree of caution in Bangladesh due to the high threat of terrorist attack and the uncertain political situation. Pay close attention to your personal security at all times. Monitor the media and other sources about possible security risks."

There is reliable information to suggest that militants may be planning to target Australian and Western interests in Bangladesh," the Australian travel advice said.