

BNP's Quayum

FROM PAGE 16

Security (Proofs), a project of Netherlands-based organisation ICCO Cooperation.

Middle East-based Islamic State claimed responsibility for the attack, according to US-based SITE Intelligence Group, which monitors jihadist activities worldwide.

The claims, however, were rejected by the police and the home minister.

But Rapid Action Battalion quoting documents recovered from several "Neo JMB" dens claimed on Friday that Tavella was shot dead by the militant group.

A press release distributed by the special force at a briefing had a list of 19 attacks claimed by the "Neo JMB" and Tavella killing was mentioned at the top.

The attacks were carried out by militants under the leadership of Shaykh Abu Ibrahim Al Hanif alias Sarwar Jahan alias Abdur Rahman who jumped to his death while trying to flee during a Rab raid on a building in Ashulia on October 8, it said, quoting the documents.

Talking to reporters, several top DMP officials repeatedly said Tavella murder was part of a conspiracy to create anarchy, put pressure on the government and send a message to foreigners that they were not safe in Bangladesh.

The Detective Branch of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police, which investigated the murder case over the months, submitted the charge sheet on June 28 this year.

During the investigation, four out of five arrested accused, except Matin, confessed to the killing.

According to the charge sheet, Sohail supplied the firearms while Sharif provided the motorcycle used in the killing.

Quayum's brother Matin hired three killers to kill a "white man" (foreigner) and Tavella became their prey, the charge sheet added.

Police are yet to recover the firearms used in the killing.

Meanwhile, BNP senior leader Nazrul Islam Khan yesterday alleged that Qaiyum was implicated in the Tavella murder case due to the current trend of politicisation of crimes.

"You've seen Rab has said militants were behind the murder of Italian citizen Cesare Tavella. But police submitted a report saying BNP men, including our ex-commissioner Qaiyum who was abroad during the incident, were involved in it. Whom should we believe?" he said.

The BNP standing committee member made the allegation while speaking at a discussion at Kochi Kachar Mela auditorium organised by Zia Shishu Kishore Mela, marking the

Police probing

FROM PAGE 1

Two other members are Additional DIG (discipline) at the Police Headquarters Abul Alim Mahmud and Director (operations) at the Rab Headquarters Lt Col Mahbul Alam.

The committee will also recommend measures to avert such incidents in future.

Rab Director General Benazir Ahmed in a letter dated September 27 to Senior Home Secretary Mozammel Haque Khan alleged that police on several occasions assaulted Rab personnel even after knowing their identities. "In some cases, police hit Rab members with sticks and even rifles."

A list of the six incidents was attached with the letter.

Benazir, himself a top police official, requested the senior home secretary to take action against the persons at fault and other necessary steps to avoid any unwarranted incident.

Officials at the Police Headquarters said two of the six incidents have already been investigated by high officials of police and Rab and both police and Rab members were found guilty in those cases.

The officials dealing with the two incidents recommended departmental actions against the police and Rab members responsible.

One incident took place at the

entrance of Armed Police Battalion Headquarters in the capital's Uttara while the other in Chittagong, the officials added.

Four other incidents were also investigated by high officials of police. In two cases, they found that the police members concerned showed high-handed attitude. In the other two cases, it was Rab members who violated rules, said an official wishing anonymity.

Referring to two incidents that took place at Tangail and in the capital's Mirpur, the official said they took place as Rab members violated traffic rules.

AKM Shahidur Rahman, head of the three-member committee, however, refused to make any comment about the matter.

CIRCULAR TO BE ISSUED

The Police Headquarters will soon issue a circular instructing police and Rab members not to get locked in any brawl, said a top police official.

"If any such situation arises, the senior person on the spot, be it a police man or a Rab member, will make an immediate decision and report it to the higher authorities," said another official, wishing anonymity.

Through the circular, the Police Headquarters will also instruct law enforcers to take photos of the event and the person in case of any rules violation by any force member, and send the photos to the higher authori-

AL names 22 secys

FROM PAGE 16

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Law Affairs Secretary Abdul Matin Khasru, Information and Research Secretary Afzal Hossain, Office Secretary Abdus Sobhan Golap, Religious Affairs Secretary Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, Publicity and Publication Affairs Secretary Hasan Mahmud, Women Affairs Secretary Fazilatunnesa Indira, Commerce and Industries Secretary Abdus Sattar and Labour and Manpower Affairs Secretary Habibur Rahman Siraj retained their posts.

The first meeting of the party presidium is scheduled to be held at the Gono Bhaban on Friday evening with AL chief Hasina in the chair.

Public Administration Minister Syed Ashraf Islam, Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid, former ministers Abdur Razzak, Faruk Khan and Abdul Mannan Khan were also included in the party's highest policymaking body.

During its national council, the AL re-elected Sheikh Hasina the president and made Obaidul Quader the new general secretary.

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61 killed

FROM PAGE 1

"They... knocked at the locked rooms and told the cadets that they were from the army, and when they opened the doors, they fired at them," a 22-year-old cadet called Hikmatullah told AFP from his hospital bed where he was recovering from a gunshot wound to the left shoulder.

"They came in by jumping over the walls of the academy which are very low. I ran away from my room and was hit by a bullet, I still managed to flee."

The attack on the Balochistan Police College, around 20 kilometres east of the provincial capital Quetta, began around 11:10 pm on Monday, with gunfire continuing to ring out at the site for several hours.

Sarfaraz Bugti, home minister of Balochistan province, told reporters the attackers first killed a tower sentry before accessing the grounds.

A morgue list seen by AFP listed 61 people were killed in the attack, while 118 were injured, according to a government spokesman.

Major General Sher Afgan, chief of the paramilitary Frontier Corps in Balochistan which led the counter-operation, blamed the attack on the Pakistani Taliban-affiliated Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) militant group, and said the counter-strike was over in three hours.

An emailed claim from the Pakistani Taliban, which shares close operational ties with LeJ, backed that assertion.

"This attack was carried (out on the instructions of) Mullah Daud Mansour, close ally of Hakimullah Mehsud and head of Pakistani Taliban in Karachi," it said, adding four fighters took part.

"This was to avenge the killing of those of our Mujahideen who were killed indiscriminately (in fake encounters) outside jails in Punjab," it said in an apparent reference to the recent surge in extrajudicial executions of LeJ fighters.

The Islamic State group also made a claim via Amaq, its affiliated news agency, and released a picture of what it said were the three attackers.

LeJ officially pledges allegiance to al-Qaeda, the IS group's major rival. But the dual claims could be evidence of new linkages that remain unofficial, analysts say.

"In the Quetta attack, Lashkar-e-

Jhangvi's claim seems to carry more weightage but IS has released photographs of the militants and this link between LeJ and IS will be determined in the coming days," said analyst Amir Rana, the director of the Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies, a think-tank.

FUNERAL HONOURS

Pakistan's top military and intelligence brass including army Chief Raheel Sharif attended an official funeral ceremony for the victims, whose bodies were placed in coffins draped in white and borne by soldiers in dress uniform.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif later flew to Quetta to chair a high level security meeting.

It was the third deadliest attack of the year in Pakistan, which has been racked by a homegrown Islamist insurgency since shortly after the US-led invasion of Afghanistan in 2001.

The compound remained sealed to journalists but mobile video footage shot by an intelligence official showed the hollowed remains of a large dormitory hall covered in thick soot.

Weeping relatives were sent to the main hospital, where citizens rushed to donate blood.

STRIFE-HIT PROVINCE

Mineral-rich but impoverished Balochistan, Pakistan's largest province, is beset by sectarian strife, Islamist violence and an on-off separatist insurgency that has lasted for decades.

In August, a suicide bombing at a Quetta hospital claimed by the Islamic State group and the Jamaat-ul-Ahrar faction of the Pakistani Taliban killed 73 people, including many of the city's legal community which had gone there to mourn the fatal shooting of a colleague.

Pakistan has been battling an Islamist insurgency since shortly after it decided to ally with the US following its invasion of Afghanistan in 2001.

Violence has declined in recent years following a series of military offensives in the northwest border areas as well as concerted efforts to block the militants' sources of funding.

But the remnants of militant groups are still able to carry out periodic bloody attacks, particularly in the northwest.

District council elections likely on Dec 28

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) is going to announce in mid-November the schedule for the first-ever elections to the district councils likely to be held on December 28.

"We have already started taking preparations for holding the elections... We will announce the poll schedule around 40 to 45 days ahead of the voting date," Election Commissioner Shah Nawaz told reporters yesterday.

On Monday, the LGRD ministry sent a letter to the EC requesting them to hold the district council elections on December 28.

The House on October 6 passed the District Council (Amendment) Bill, 2016.

Talking to the reporters at his office at the EC Secretariat, the commissioner said ministers, MPs and other VIPs would not be allowed to join the campaign like other local government polls.

Candidates would not be allowed to use loudspeakers or hold rallies for electioneering since there are very few voters compared to other local government elections.

According to the laws, only the elected representatives of different local government bodies -- city corporations, upazila parishads and union parishads -- will vote to elect a chairman, 15 general members and five women members in each district council.

In 2000, the Awami League-led government repealed the Zila Parishad Act, 1988 and passed the District Council Act, 2000, with a provision for direct polls. But no elections to the councils had been held so far, allowing bureaucrats to run those bodies.

In December 2011, the AL government appointed 61 administrators, mostly top leaders of the ruling party's district units, to as many district councils.

America wins

FROM PAGE 16

that hampered Runswift.

"We've been using that robot for three or four days straight, and just before the finals, it stops," said Collette.

"Then we had another problem with another robot, which is kind of like a perfect storm for us."

Robot soccer matches have been played since the mid-1990s, and this competition used Nao robots, about 23 inches (58 cm) tall, developed by French company Aldebaran Robotics.

Programmed by advanced programming students at the universities, the robots exchanged information wirelessly and 'bet' on which of their teammates would reach the ball first.

"The robots are telling each other where they believe the ball is, where they believe that they are on the field, if they've fallen down or not, and then they're also to decide who goes for the ball," explained University of Texas at Austin student Josiah Hanna.

Monday's match drew a large crowd of spectators.

"I think these robots are able to move quite flexibly, and this is a pleasant surprise," said Sun Qiong, who brought her son to watch the match.

Ad starring

FROM PAGE 16

commercial down on October 21.

"We complied with their request," Anisur told The Daily Star yesterday.

The advertisement focuses on two characters. Sabbir plays himself while model Naila Nayem plays the role of a police inspector. In the commercial, people across Bangladesh are seen searching for Sabbir, who has lost touch with the outside world since he is busy drinking the non-alcoholic beverage in a secret room in his house. After finding Sabbir, the inspector handcuffs herself to him.

According to the chairman of BCB's media wing, Jalal Yunus, the board felt that the advertisement was not an appropriate one for a cricketer to be associated with.

"The BCB asked the company to take the television commercial down because we thought it wasn't an advertisement we wanted Sabbir to be associated with. There are thousands of children and individuals who are inspired by Sabbir and we don't want his image to be hurt," Yunus told The Daily Star yesterday.

Meanwhile, Anisur said that his company would have a meeting with Sabbir after the conclusion of the England series in order to resolve the problem.

"We have taken down the advertisement and we have incurred losses because of that. But that's something which can be handled. We will talk to Sabbir afterwards and manage the situation. We have a good relationship with the BCB. We are their beverage partner. I am sure whatever solution we come to will work well for both Sabbir and us," said Anisur.

Powers talk Mosul in Paris

FROM PAGE 16

"On our front, we have advanced to within five or six kilometres (three to four miles) of Mosul," their commander, General Abdelghani al-Assadi, told AFP.

"We must now coordinate with forces on other fronts to launch a coordinated" attack on Mosul, he said, speaking from the Christian town of Bartalla.

Kurdish peshmerga forces are making gains on the northeastern front, but federal forces advancing from the south have some way to go before reaching the outskirts.

Meanwhile, thousands of men from the Hashed al-Shaabi paramilitary umbrella group dominated by Tehran-backed Shiite militias were preparing for a push to the west of mainly Sunni Mosul.

The Hashed's mission will be to "cut off and prevent the escape of (IS) towards Syria and fully isolate Mosul from Syria," said Jawwad al-Tulaibawi, spokesman for the Asaib Ahl al-Haq militia.

"We expect that it will be a difficult and fierce battle," he said.

Iraqi Kurds and Sunni Arab politicians have opposed the Hashed's participation in the operation, as has Turkey, which has a military presence east of Mosul despite repeated demands by Baghdad to withdraw its forces.

Tensions have risen between Baghdad and Ankara, whose foreign minister, Mevlut Cavusoglu, yesterday warned that if there is a threat to Turkey, "we are ready to use all our resources including a ground operation."

As Iraqi forces advance, the United Nations said it has received reports of dozens of execution-type killings by IS in Nineveh province, of which Mosul is the capital.

Citing preliminary reports, the UN said those killed included 50 police officers who had been held hostage.

In Paris, French Defence Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian was meeting coalition counterparts, including Pentagon chief Ashton Carter, to review the war on IS after more than two years of air strikes, training and on-the-ground military advisers.

Besides coordinating their support for the forces closing in on Mosul,

ministers also discussed the Syria side of the campaign and said they were "laying the groundwork" for the isolation of Raqqa.

France is keen to tackle Raqqa, where the 3,000 to 4,000 IS fighters include a contingent of around 300 French nationals whose potential return to France when the "caliphate" disintegrates is considered a major national threat.

As the ministers met, Hollande warned that "the recapture is not an end in itself. We must already anticipate the consequences of the fall of Mosul."

"What is at stake is the political future of the city, the region and Iraq," Hollande said, calling for "all ethnic and religious groups" to have a say in the future running of Mosul.

Seeking to draw attention away from the Mosul campaign, IS has staged attacks in the northern city of Kirkuk and western town of Rutba in recent days.

Jihadists seized two neighbourhoods in Rutba, but officials said it retook them fully.

Senior Iraqi and US military officials have reported that IS leaders are already trying to leave Mosul to reach the Syrian side of their "caliphate".

But a senior official close to Le Drian said a few hundred IS fighters recently moved in the opposite direction, reinforcing the estimated 3,000 to 5,000 jihadists defending Mosul.

IS had shown increasing pragmatism in recent battles, tending to fall back in the face of superior firepower.

But with its claim to run a "caliphate" losing credibility with every new loss of territory, IS has mounted a fierce and well-organised resistance in the fight for Mosul.

The city is where IS supremo Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi proclaimed the cross-border "caliphate" in June 2014, and its loss could spell the end of the group's days as a land-holding force in the Iraqi part.

In Moscow, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov yesterday equated US support for Iraqi efforts to recapture Mosul with Russian backing of a Syrian government offensive to seize rebel-held east Aleppo.

Raped, little girl

FROM PAGE 1

her, said her rickshaw-puller father.

Next morning, villagers found her lying bloodied and unconscious on a field in the same village.

She was first rushed to a local hospital and later moved to Rangpur Medical College Hospital (RMCH). As her condition worsened, she was then taken to the DMCH, said Bikash Majumder, a paediatrician at the RMCH.

Evidence of rape was found in her body, Bilkis Begum, coordinator of the OCC at the DMCH, said, adding that the victim was beaten and bitten. There were marks of burn from cigarettes and sharp-weapon injuries on her body.

"She is under observation. She will have a surgery today," Bilkis added.

Two journos press witness

FROM PAGE 16

and New Age, went to Itbaria village under sadar upazila of the district around noon on October 19 and met Monowara Begum, a Birangona and the witness, police said, referring to the GD.

They asked her what she knew about the tortures carried out by five war crimes accused in the village during the 1971 Liberation War.

The journalists then stopped her in the middle of her narrative and told her not to testify against the accused. She did not agree to do so, Monowara said in the GD filed two days later with Patuakhali Sadar Police Station, said Officer-in-Charge SM Tariqul Islam.

The war crimes accused are Eshaq Shikder, 83, Abdul Goni Hawlader, 72, Md Awal alias Awal Moulavi, 69, Abdus Sattar Pyada, 65, and Solaiman Mridha, 86, of Patuakhali sadar upazila. All are in jail now.

The prosecution on October 16 pressed two charges of crimes against humanity against them.

Meanwhile, police on Monday arrested the journalists in an extortion case filed by a local fish trader. They were released on bail yesterday.

An investigation is on into the alleged extortion and the matter cited in the GD, police said.

Zakir Hossain, one of the journalists, claimed that the allegations brought against them were "baseless and false."

Investigation officer Mominul Islam, however, quoted Monowara as saying in the GD that the journalists told her she would get Tk 2 lakh and a house for not testifying in the war crimes case.

Another prosecution witness of the case told police that she had received a similar offer from the journalists.

Monowara and the other witness communicated the matter to Satya

Meanwhile, police arrested one of the alleged rapists, Saiful Islam, 42, of Jamirhat village in Parbatipur, at Dinajpur town Monday night.

Acting on a tip-off, police raided Gora-Shahid Boromath area and arrested him. He was produced before a Dinajpur court which sent him to jail yesterday, reports our Dinajpur correspondent.

Mahmudul Alam, officer-in-charge of Parbatipur Police Station, said they were trying to arrest another accused.

The father of the five-year-old filed a rape case with Parbatipur police on Thursday, accusing Saiful, one of their neighbours, and one Afzal Hossain, 48, of Jamirhat, of raping the girl.

Demanding exemplary punishment of the culprits, he said, "I cannot even imagine how brutal one can be

Ranjoy Roy, the investigation officer of the war crimes case. Satya asked the Patuakhali superintendent of police to take legal steps in this regard.

Satya confirmed the matter but declined to give details.

"We will take legal measures after a proper investigation," said Mominul Islam, sub-inspector of the Patuakhali police station.

Meanwhile, the tribunal's investigation agency yesterday wrote to the Chief Prosecutor's Office to take action against the journalists under the International Crimes (Tribunals) Act-1973.

It made the move on receiving a report regarding the matter from Patuakhali police, the agency's coordinator Abdul Hannan Khan told The Daily Star last night.

The ICT can punish anyone under section-11 (4) of the act for obstructing the trial process, he said, adding that asking a witness not to give testimony in a case is tantamount to obstructing the trial.

According to the charges pressed against the war crimes accused, they along with Pakistani army personnel killed 17 people in Itbaria village, torched and looted 21 houses, and abducted six children and 15 women in 1971. The abductees were confined to Patuakhali Circuit House and raped for 10 days.

EXTORTION CASE

Dulal Mridha of Muslimpara in the district town filed the case on October 24, alleging that the journalists went to his shop around 5:00pm four days back and demanded Tk 50,000. They threatened to publish news linking him with illegal hilsa trading, police said.

When Dulal refused to give them the money, they took pictures of the shop. They again went to the shop on Monday and took Tk 1.07 lakh from his pocket and the cash box, according to the case statement.