

Jhenidah headmaster 'assaulted by BCL man'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

A secondary school headmaster was allegedly assaulted by a Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) leader after some students brought down some flowers from the platform of a Shaheed Minar on the school premises in Jhenidah's Kaliganj upazila on Tuesday.

Rafiqul Islam of Haatbarbar Secondary School told The Daily Star that he took first aid at a nearby clinic following the assault by BCL Barbarbar union unit General Secretary Feroz Hossain before hundreds of students and staff.

He claimed that the union parishad Chairman Abul Kalam Azad was a couple of yards away during the assault. He also said the chairman, just minutes earlier, had hurled profanities at him over the students' actions.

Rafiqul said previous years' experience had prompted him to ask the students beforehand to stop the flowers from being taken away by children some time after being placed by locals paying homage to the Language Movement martyrs.

He said to have rebuked the students who brought down the flowers. Assistant Headmaster Golam Sarwar said he witnessed the incident and that the assault occurred after the chairman had left.

Feroz, however, claimed that only an altercation took place. Abul admitted hurling abuses and said he did not know what happened afterwards.

The upazila BCL General Secretary Kazi Ripon said a probe would be launched if allegations were raised against any BCL leader and organisational action taken against anyone found guilty.

Kaliganj Police Station Officer-in-Charge Aminul Islam said they would take steps once a complaint was filed.

British IS bomber was ex-Gitmo Bay detainee

AFP, London

A suicide bomber from the Islamic State group was a British citizen detained at Guantanamo Bay, a family member told The Times newspaper yesterday.

The British fighter who IS claimed detonated a suicide bomb against Iraqi forces outside Mosul was named in British media as Jamal al-Harith, who was detained at the United States base between 2002 and 2004.

An image released by IS and published on Monday by the SITE Intelligence Group was confirmed as al-Harith by his brother Leon Jameson.

"It is him, I can tell by his smile. If it is true then I've lost a brother, so another family (member) gone," Jameson told The Times.

Channel 4 News cited an unnamed family member and another anonymous source as confirming Harith was pictured.

The photograph shows him smiling, dressed in camouflage clothing and appearing to be sat in a vehicle with wires and switches in the background.

The British government said it could not verify the reports.

"The UK has advised for some time against all travel to Syria, and against all travel to large parts of Iraq."

"As all UK consular services are suspended in Syria and greatly limited in Iraq, it is extremely difficult to confirm the whereabouts and status of British nationals in these areas," a spokesman told AFP.

3 hurt in Ctg

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Sub-inspector Jahirul Islam, of the CMCH police outpost.

Witnesses said the conflict ensued between two groups of BCL when Abdullah Al Mamun, former BCL leader of Chittagong city unit, prevented Milton, former general secretary of Chittagong Polytechnic Institute unit BCL, from withdrawing the tender form from the city corporation around 3:00pm. Then the two groups were locked in an altercation.

Later, Chittagong City Corporation Mayor AJM Nasir Uddin drove the two groups out from the building. Again the two groups attacked each other in front of Chittagong City Corporation building around 5:30pm.

During the clash, the three suffered bullet injuries. A city corporation official said yesterday was the last day for collecting tender form for 17 ghats that fall under the jurisdiction of the city corporation.



PHOTO: STAR

Former Jatiya Party lawmaker Abdul Kader Khan, the alleged mastermind behind the killing of Gaibandha Awami League MP Manjurul Islam Liton, being taken to a Gaibandha court yesterday. He was arrested on Tuesday.

Political ambition

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arrested on the basis of those, Faruq said.

He further said Kader lured them into committing the crime by offering money, and had them trained on how to operate firearms at a warehouse for six months.

Liton's family members couldn't be reached for comments.

With the help of Bogra police on Tuesday, a team of Gaibandha police arrested Kader, a physician by profession, at his residence-cum-clinic in Rahmannagar area of Bogra town.

Yesterday, the Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate's Court in Gaibandha placed Kader on a 10-day remand after police produced him before it.

Public Prosecutor Shafiqur Rahman told journalists, "Police sought the court's permission to take Kader Khan on a 10-day remand, and the court accepted the remand prayer."

On December 31 last year, Liton was killed by unknown assailants who opened fire on him inside his home in Gaibandha's Sundarganj upazila.

Later, Liton's sister Tahmida Akhter Kakoli filed a murder case with Sundarganj Police Station against four to five unknown persons.

Following the murder, law enforcers and ruling party lawmakers speculated that religious extremists might be behind the killing.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, the DIG said they had not yet found involvement of religious extremists in the murder.

"After the killing, we said we kept all the aspects in mind. Now we have found that Kader Khan did this using his men. We haven't so far found any involvement of religious extremists [in the killing]."

He claimed that Kader got Liton killed to "clear his obstacles to getting elected in the next parliamentary elections."

After Liton's death, Gaibandha-1 constituency fell vacant. The by-polls would be held on March 22.

Kader, who is from Paschim Chaparhati village in Gaibandha's Sundarganj upazila, collected nomination papers to contest the by-election but didn't submit those.

He was elected from the parliamentary seat as a candidate of the AL-led grand alliance in the 2008 general elections. Kader used to publish a newspaper -- Dainik Uttorer Khobor -- from Bogra.

Talking to The Daily Star, Kader's family members said they suspected that he would be arrested any time as police personnel had been deployed around their house since Thursday evening.

The deployment came after Kader collected the nomination papers. Most

2 'criminals'

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criminals opened fire on them. The DB men fired back in retaliation, triggering the "gunfight".

Two of the attackers were killed on the spot. One of the DB men was also injured, he added.

Abdul Aziz, 28, an assistant sub-inspector of DB, was shot in his right leg and was taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital, said Sub-inspector Bacchu Mia, in-charge of the DMCH police outpost.

of the law enforcers, however, left the area after Kader announced that he would not submit the papers.

Asked, SP Ashraful Alam said on Tuesday that police were deployed there to provide security to Kader as he had collected nomination papers for the by-polls.

THE KILLING MISSION

Kader had planned to kill Liton in October last year but failed, DIG Faruq told journalists.

According to the plan, Liton's car would be hit by a vehicle from behind, and when he would get down from his car, shots would be fired at him. But that plan went in vein.

Then, another plot was hatched to murder Liton, and this time it worked.

On December 31 evening, Mehedi, Shaheen and Hannan -- none of whom is a professional killer -- carried out the mission. Mehedi fired five shots at Liton, leaving him dead at his home.

The trio entered Liton's house, saying they had an urgent matter to discuss with him. Entering the room, Mehedi opened fire. As Liton tried to stop Mehedi, the bullet hit his hand.

Failing to hit where he intended to with his first shot, Mehedi grew nervous. He then closed his eyes and started firing indiscriminately.

After killing Liton, they escaped on a black motorbike. They abandoned it after reaching the main road where Kader's car was parked. They later went to Bogra, and took shelter in Kader's house. From there, they travelled to Dhaka by bus, and went into hiding with Kader's help, said the police official.

The motorbike used by the trio was registered in Kader's name. Police seized it.

Indian foreign

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Delhi by a Jet Airways aircraft.

Diplomatic sources said Jaishankar, during his meeting with Hasina, is expected to brief her about the Indian government's plan on the visit.

"The Indian foreign secretary will convey Prime Minister Narendra Modi's message to her about New Delhi's readiness to welcome her," said a diplomatic source, adding that this time she would be given a huge reception by the Indian government.

Lady Liberty

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"And it's not just our ancestors. Every American knows an immigrant or a refugee. We wanted to send a reminder about America when we're at our best -- the country that's a beacon of freedom to the world, built by immigrants. Walling off countries or entire religions is against our values. That's what the Statue of Liberty stands for."

The group also took to Twitter, posting the image with a caption: "We must heed the words of Lady Liberty: #RefugeesWelcome"

US President Trump is expected to sign a new executive order in the name of protecting America from foreign terror networks. His first order banned citizens from seven majority Muslim countries and was blocked in a federal court last month.

Probe drags

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Biswas and Jafran -- are now behind bars. Another suspect Abul Bashar, brother of the Ansarullah Bangla Team's (ABT) spiritual leader Jashim Uddin Rahmani, died in jail custody while undergoing treatment at Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

"We are trying to arrest the masterminds and those who carried out the attack. We have all information about them. Once some of them are arrested, we'll be able to submit the charge sheet to the court," said Mashrukure Rahman Khaled, deputy commissioner of the Detective Branch of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) and also the supervising officer of the case.

The DMP on August 21 last year claimed to have identified six suspected killers of Avijit after analysing the CCTV footage captured on February 26, 2015 in and around the venue of Amar Ekushey Book Fair.

It posted seven video clips, captured moments before Avijit was murdered, on the DMP's official Facebook page and sought information from people that could lead to the arrest of the six suspects.

One of the seven video clips was released earlier. Police from that clip identified one as Sharif alias Saleh alias Arif alias Hadi and said he was a suspect. He was later killed in "crossfire" with law enforcers in the city's Khilgaon area on June 19 last year.

Sharif topped a list of six members of banned militant outfit ABT on whom police declared a bounty on May 19 last year.

DMP DC Mashrukure said suspected organiser of ABT Selim alias Iqbal alias Mamun alias Hadi-2 had led the operation to kill Avijit.

DB officials said Maj (sacked) Syed Ziaul Haq, who also uses pseudonyms Sagar, Ishtiaq and Imtiaz, administered oaths to the six ABT men at a Mohakhali hideout. The six later carried out the attack in two groups.

The ABT was later called Ansar al Islam and Zia is the chief of its operations wing.

According to the DB, the "ashkari group" took position at a rented house on Elephant Road and carried out the attack after receiving information from the "intel group".

Police collected 11 kinds of evidence from the spot and sent those to the DNA lab of the US Federal Bureau of Investigation. However, the DNA profiles did not match with those of the arrested suspects.

As a rising militant outfit, the ABT wanted to launch al-Qaeda in Bangladesh like al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS). But the AQIS headquarters in Pakistan did not approve the idea and suggested Ansarullah be renamed Ansar al Islam and work as the Bangladesh chapter of AQIS, said police.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, Ajay Roy yesterday said he was not satisfied with the progress of the investigation as police were yet to arrest all the killers of his son.

He expressed optimism that law enforcers would pick up the killers soon.

3 siblings killed

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were sleeping there and he strangulated them to death, the OC said.

Yeasin and Mariam were at a room while Marzia was sleeping at another room. Their father Abul Kalam was outside.

Rubel then went to his elder brother Atiqur Rahman, 25, who is a teacher of Darulunnata Islamia Madrasa. He called out Atiqur of the madrasa, saying that their mother was sick. As soon as they reached in front of the nearby mosque, Rubel started hacking his brother indiscriminately, the police official said.

Hearing Atiqur's screams, locals caught Rubel and handed him over to police, the OC said.

Locals said Rubel married Sufia Begum of his village four years ago and the couple has a three-year-old daughter.

Sufia said her husband used to attend different religious gatherings. She recently noticed some changes in her husband, who asked her to follow religious activities properly.

She has been living in her parents' house for the last three days.

Kulsum Begum and Abul Kalam, parents of Rubel, said their son Rubel had been asking them to stop all kind of household activities for the last three or four days. Rubel was even locked in an altercation with his elder brother Atiqur over a family matter.

Shahriar Alam, additional superintendent of Narsingdi police, said they were investigating the incident to find out the motive behind the killings.

A warning for reckless

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industry of Bangladesh. Therefore, there is no rational scope to show any lenient view towards the accused," Judge Al Mahmud Faijul Kabir said in his verdict, adding that the convicted driver had no licence and was running an unfit bus.

On one count, the court handed the driver life imprisonment and fined him Tk 5,000, in default of which he will have to stay in jail for another three months.

On another count, he was sentenced to two years in jail and fined Tk 2,000, in default of which he would serve in jail for one more month.

The sentences will run concurrently, said the verdict.

The convict might stay behind bars until his death as Chief Justice Surendra Kumar Sinha has recently said imprisonment for life means jail until death.

He, however, can file an appeal against the verdict.

Road accidents with heavy casualties are common in Bangladesh but the drivers responsible in most of the cases escape trial. Though the drivers are punished in a few cases, awarding life imprisonment is rare, said experts working on road accident-related issues.

On August 13, 2011, Tareque Masud, Ashfaque Munier Mishuk popularly known as Mishuk Munier, and their film production crew -- Wasim, Jamal and microbus driver Mostafizur Rahman-died in the fatal road crash on the Dhaka-Aricha highway at Joka under Ghior upazila of Manikganj.

Tareque's wife Catherine Masud, artist Dhali Al Mamun, his wife Dilara Zaman Jolly and film production staff Saiful Islam were injured in the accident.

The team was on its way to meet the Manikganj deputy commissioner for permission to shoot for Tareque's project "Kagojer Phool" after visiting a shooting spot at Saljana village in Shibbalaya upazila. A Chuadanga-bound bus from Dhaka collided with the microbus carrying the team.

Sub-inspector of Ghior Police Station Lutfar Rahman filed a case the same day against the bus driver, who was arrested at his relative's house at Gangni upazila of Meherpur two days later.

Investigating officer Ashraf-Ul-Islam submitted the charge sheet in the case on March 22 in 2012.

The accident triggered a huge public outcry with campaigners and eminent citizens blaming the government for stomaching the "road terrorism" that "murders" thousands every year and demanded immediate resignation of the then communications minister for his inaction.

The then communication minister Syed Abul Hossain faced severe criticism from his cabinet colleagues and even Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina expressed annoyance over poor conditions of the highways.

Amid the uproar over the road safety issue, Shipping Minister Shahjahan Khan who is a leader of transport workers came up on August 18 that year with a "revelation" that "a driver does not need to be educated to get a driving licence".

CONVICT HAD NO LICENCE

After examining statements of 24 prosecution witnesses and two witnesses from the defence in the last five and a half years, the court delivered the verdict yesterday.

The court in the verdict said, "After driving the entire night without any driving licence, the accused drove the unfit bus recklessly despite rain and turns on the road and hit the microbus after overtaking a minibus".

By doing that, the driver not only caused Tk 5 lakh damage to the microbus but also caused the death of five persons.

'STILL TRAUMATIZED'

In his instant reaction to yesterday's verdict, Asif Munier, younger brother of Mishuk Munier, told The Daily Star that they were not feeling any self-satisfaction.

"The execution of the verdict would be a closure of a chapter".

Referring to Mishuk's mother, wife and the couple's son, Asif said they were still traumatized by the accident.

He said their lawyers had requested them to go to the court yesterday to hear the verdict pronouncement. But they did not go there as they would have to cross the highway where the accident happened. "We are still not mentally prepared to cross the road."

Asif said people are getting killed on the roads every day. But most of the families of the victims don't want to launch any legal battle as it takes much time.

"We hope yesterday's verdict would encourage them to file cases. We will be very happy if they too get justice."

He also demanded that those involved in irregularities in the transport sector be brought to justice.

Meanwhile, Madhob Saha, lawyer for convict Jamir, claimed that his client was innocent and that they would appeal against the verdict at the High Court.

"I am not guilty... I did not kill anybody. I just manoeuvred my vehicle to my left," Jamir said after the verdict was pronounced.

PROCESSION OF DEATH

Road crashes in the last couple of weeks marked a sharp rise in the country, claiming many lives and injuring many others.

At least 811 people were killed and 1,677 others injured in 609 road crashes this year until yesterday, according to Bangladesh Passengers' Welfare Association.

On average, more than 15 people lost their lives on the road every day.

Reckless driving, run-down and unfit vehicles, modifying body structure of vehicles, establishing roadside kitchen markets, operating unauthorised three-wheelers on highways, operating vehicles by unlicensed drivers, among other issues, are mainly to blame, said experts.

Even though hundreds of vehicles hit the roads every week, the vital road safety issue remains largely ignored, they said.

Talking to The Daily Star, two experts said a few years ago, a court sentenced a man to life in prison over a road accident. They, however, could not give details of the case.

On December 8, 2011, a Chittagong court awarded five years' imprisonment to the trucker responsible for a road crash in Mirsarai upazila that killed 44 people, most of whom were students, on July 11, 2011.

But the convict was acquitted by the higher court later, said Mozammel Hoque Chowdhury, secretary general of Bangladesh Passengers' Welfare Association.

[Our Manikganj correspondent Jahangir Alam contributed to this report]



Jamir Hossain

'Demonising' policies

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"We have reached a point where there is no longer any red line. Almost no action has become too appalling or indefensible," Shetty said. "In this new reality it's easy to imagine a dystopian future where unrestrained brutality becomes a new normal."

He said that last year the world "ceased to be shocked by the deliberate bombing of hospitals and schools in conflict zones."

But while acknowledging "the parallels that many are drawing between the present time and 1930s Europe," Shetty said "We must not be fatalistic."

He called on "leaders, but especially people, to stand up against the politics of demonisation".

Shetty denounced the Trump administration's attempted travel ban as inhumane, illegal and "just plain stupid... because what it's doing is making all of us, not just people in the United States, less safe."

After a federal judge blocked the ban affecting all refugees and anyone from seven Muslim-majority countries, the White House is planning a new order this week that would allow it to circumvent the court.

"So in the country that used to say 'Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free'... we now have the politics of demonisation at work," Shetty said.

"One of the most dangerous things

that happened in 2016 was to increasingly start equating refugees with terrorists, and this is a very systematic change of discourse by (those) who want to create this impression... based on close to zero evidence," he said.

The London-based Amnesty took the unusual step of unveiling the report in Paris, Shetty said, because France, which heads into presidential elections in two months, is "the cradle of human rights".

But today its citizens are seeing their rights eroded in the name of security, he said.

"There are few countries in the world where human rights are more tightly woven in the national psyche than in France," he said, but now the country is at "a tipping point".

He took aim at the Socialist government for repeatedly extending a state of emergency since the November 2015 terror attacks in Paris that killed 130 people.

The increased security measures, which extend police powers of search and arrest, have been backed by "all political parties" in France, he noted.

"It's absolutely the responsibility of the government to protect the people, but it has to be proportionate," he said, speaking out against "traumatising house raids... all pointing towards one religion".

"We are very worried about the situation here," he added.

"The world is watching France."