



The suspected members of robbery gang who were arrested in Savar on the outskirts of the capital on Thursday night.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

S Korea's ousted president expelled from own party

AFP, Seoul

Ousted South Korean president Park Geun-Hye's own political party expelled her yesterday as it seeks to distance itself from the sprawling corruption scandal that led to her impeachment.

The decision had been taken "for the future of our party and the country", said Hong Joon-Pyo, chairman of the Liberty Korea Party -- which has already changed its name from the Saenuri banner under which Park was elected.

Park was impeached by parliament in December after months of mass protests against her over a sprawling corruption scandal, and the constitutional court upheld the decision in March, removing her from office. She went on criminal trial in May.

Her dismissal dealt a huge blow to her party, with some of its lawmakers defecting to back her impeachment, and Hong came a distant second to new President Moon Jae-In in the election to choose her successor.

Liberty Korea, which currently holds 107 seats in the 299-member parliament, is hoping that Park's expulsion will prompt some lawmakers to return and help it regain its status as the largest party from Moon's Democrats, who have 121 seats.

"I judged that in order for the Liberty Korea Party to regain its status as the main conservative bloc, it must cast off its yoke as the Park Geun-Hye party," Hong said.

Park rose to power in 2012 largely thanks to the popularity of her late strongman father, Park Chung-Hee, who had spearheaded the South's stellar economic growth under his 1961-79 military-backed rule.

But the scandal that emerged last year unleashed nationwide fury, even among many of her conservative supporters.

Park denies multiple charges including bribery, coercion and abuse of power for offering governmental favours to tycoons, and is being held in custody.

DC's SIM

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Ranjit, however, felt suspicious and called Nazmus back to confirm the matter. It then came to light that Nazmus' cell number was cloned.

The DC confirmed the matter and a general diary was filed with Manikganj Sadar police.

Officer-in-Charge of Manikganj Sadar police Habibullah Sarkar said the matter was being investigated.

Fraudsters are known to make calls using a person's number by cloning their SIM cards. Only law enforcers have the technology to track down such callers.

The Daily Star had earlier reported an incident citing a Rab official that a gang cloned the mobile numbers of the DCs of Kushtia, Sirajganj, Nilphamari, Dinajpur and Brahmanbaria, and some other officials.

Bus of bandits

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During primary interrogation, the arrestees admitted that they used to rob passengers in the guise of passengers, the ASP said.

According to police, the ringleader of the gang was identified as Bashir, one of the arrestees.

Wishing anonymity, a police official of Ashulia Police Station said the gang used to carry out robbery on the Dhaka-Aricha and the Dhaka-Tangail highways. In the daytime, they used the 52-seater bus for carrying passengers on the Dhaka-Manikganj route.

Khorshed said four policemen, including Abdul Awal, officer-in-charge of the police station, were hurt in the incident. They were given primary treatment at a local hospital.

Police seized the bus and took it to Ashulia Police Station.

Among the rescued passengers is Sanaullah, a garment worker.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, he said he boarded the bus from

Dhamrai around 10:30pm to travel to Savar.

Within a few minutes, some men tied his hands behind his back and gagged his mouth with pieces of cloths after brandishing sharp weapons.

Sanaullah said the robbers demanded money from him. At one stage, they snatched his cell phone and money.

OC Awal said two cases were filed against the 28 arrestees with Ashulia Police Station yesterday for carrying out robbery and possessing illegal firearms.

Meanwhile, a Dhaka court yesterday granted four-day remand for each of the 27 arrestees in the two cases. However, Bashir was placed on five-day remand in the firearms case and four-day remand in the other case.

ASP Khorshed said about eight to 10 of the arrestees, including Bashir, were accused in several criminal cases filed with different police stations across the country.

Bomb attack kills nine in Syria

AFP, Damascus

A suicide car bomb attack killed nine people in a government-held village in Syria's Golan Heights yesterday, state media said, reporting clashes between government forces and rebels afterwards.

State news agency SANA said the car bomb hit the outskirts of the village of Hader, which lies near the disengagement line that divides the Syrian-controlled part of the Golan from that occupied by Israel.

"A suicide bomber from Al-Nusra Front detonated a car bomb in the midst of the homes of citizens on the outskirts of Hader, killing nine people and injuring at least 23," the agency said.

Al-Nusra Front is the old name for a jihadist group that was formerly Al-Qaeda's affiliate in Syria and is now

known as the Fateh al-Sham Front.

"In the aftermath of the terrorist attack, terrorist groups carried out a heavy attack on Hader, and army units and the Popular Defence units (pro-government militants) clashed with the attackers," it added.

SANA said the toll was expected to rise because a number of those wounded in the bombing were in serious condition and the ongoing assault on the town made it difficult to remove the injured to safety.

Hader is a majority-Druze village and has been attacked in the past by rebel and jihadist groups.

It lies in southwestern Syria's Quneitra province, around 70 percent of which is held by either rebel or jihadist groups, with the government controlling the other 30 percent, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights monitor.

Internal dissent as US Republicans roll out tax bill

AFP, Washington

US Republican leaders unveiled a sweeping tax bill Thursday that would dramatically slash corporate rates, but the measure was already under fire from within the party despite pressure from President Donald Trump.

Simmering disagreements persisted over what should end up in the largest tax overhaul since Ronald Reagan's 1980s presidency, with at least one House Republican openly opposing the legislation.

The effort, conducted largely in secret in recent months, is seen by many Republicans as a shot at political redemption after they and Trump failed in their high-stakes bid to repeal

and replace Barack Obama's signature health care reforms.

"This is it. This is a very important and special moment for our country," House Speaker Paul Ryan said in announcing the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act.

Ryan said a family of four would save an average of \$1,182 a year under the plan, which he hailed as an overhaul that will "deliver real relief" for working Americans.

"It will help you save for retirement," he said. "It will help you save for a rainy day."

Trump applauded the bill as an "important step" towards tax relief, but he acknowledged the hurdles ahead in getting the controversial measure through Congress.

Ex-president

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day after his condition deteriorated, Mahmudur said.

Biswas left behind five sons, two daughters and a host of relatives, admirers and well wishers.

He was the 11th president of Bangladesh during 1991-96 when the BNP was in power.

Born in Shaistabad village of Barisal on September 1, 1926, Biswas did his BA and MA in history from Dhaka University. He had another degree in law.

He was elected member of the East Pakistan Legislative Assembly in 1962 and 1965. He also worked as a parliamentary secretary to East Pakistan from 1965 to 1969, according to Banglapedia.

He represented Pakistan at the United Nations General Assembly in 1967.

Biswas was elected a member of parliament in 1979. He served respectively as jute minister when Ziaur Rahman was the president and health minister when Justice Abdus Sattar was the president of the country, according to Banglapedia.

Biswas was elected MP in February 1991 and then elected Speaker of the Jatiya Sangsad.

President Abdul Hamid, BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia and Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir expressed sadness at the death and extended sympathy to the bereaved family members.

Meanwhile, the family sources said the first namaz-e-janaza of Biswas would be held at Barisal Zilla School at 9:30am today. The second namaz-e-janaza would be held at 11:30am in front of the BNP's Nayapalton headquarters. The third one would be held after the Johr prayers on the Supreme Court premises and the fourth one after the Asr prayers at Ghulshan Azad Mosque. Later, Biswas would be buried at the Banani graveyard in the capital.

BNP to contest

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said the government would be forced to compromise with the BNP's demand for holding the next general election under a supportive government.

Moudud also blamed the ruling Awami League men for the attack on BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's motorcade when she was heading for Cox's Bazar to distribute relief materials among Rohingya. "But no one can stop the progress of the BNP."

Khaleda will again take part in political programmes across the country, defying all obstruction, the BNP leader added.

Meanwhile, the BNP has sought permission from Dhaka Metropolitan Police to hold a rally at Suhrawardy Udyan on November 8, marking "National Revolution and Solidarity Day". Party's Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi told journalists that a letter had already been sent to the DMP in this regard.

The party has planned a 10-day programme to observe "National Revolution and Solidarity Day", marking the "civil-military uprising" on November 7, 1975.

Last year, the BNP sought permission from the DMP for the same programme at the same venue, but the party was denied that permission.

Prosecutors lobby for longer Pistorius sentence

AFP, Johannesburg

South African prosecutors were set to argue yesterday for Oscar Pistorius to be given a longer jail sentence, saying the six years he is serving for the murder of his girlfriend was "shockingly low".

The National Prosecution Authority will present its case to a one-day hearing at the Supreme Court of Appeal in Bloemfontein.

Pistorius, 30, will not be present for the latest stage of his long legal case, with judges expected to hand down their ruling at a future date.

The Paralympic athlete shot dead Reeva Steenkamp in the early hours of Valentine's Day in 2013, when he fired four times through the door of his bedroom toilet.

He pleaded not guilty at his trial in 2014 and has always denied that he killed Steenkamp in a rage, saying he mistook her for a burglar.

Pistorius was originally convicted of culpable homicide -- the equivalent of manslaughter -- but the appeal court upgraded his conviction to murder in 2015.

The minimum sentence for murder in South Africa is 15 years, but he was sentenced in 2016 to six years due to mitigating factors, including his claim he believed he was shooting an intruder.

"We believe the sentence is shockingly low," NPA spokesman Luvuyo Mfaku told AFP. "It is inappropriate if you look at the gravity of the offence."

Mfaku denied that the NPA was pursuing Pistorius due to his fame, saying "it is not personal, we are addressing a principle here".

A spokesman for the Pistorius family was not available to comment, but his lawyers have previously said they

accepted his sentence.

At the sentencing hearing last year, High Court judge Thokozile Masipa said: "He cannot be at peace. I'm of the view that a long term of imprisonment will not serve justice."

But Steenkamp's father Barry told the court that he wanted Pistorius to "pay for his crime".

Members of the ruling African National Congress (ANC) women's league, who attended many court sessions, have criticised the sentence for failing to send a message against domestic violence.

Unknown group claims Egypt police ambush

AFP, Cairo

An unknown jihadist group has claimed a deadly October 20 ambush that killed at least 16 Egyptian policemen in a statement published yesterday on militant Islamist social media channels.

The statement purporting to be from a group called Ansar al-Islam -- or "Supporters of Islam" -- also said one of its leaders, Emad al-Din Abdel Hamid, was killed in Egyptian air strikes after the ambush.

The statement could not be independently verified.

No other group has claimed responsibility for the attack on police last month that saw assailants gun down officers in a shootout between Cairo and the Bahariya oasis in the Western Desert, a rare flare-up outside Egypt's Sinai Peninsula.

Man held

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incident" following the vandalism and imposed section 144 in the area.

Later, he was charged under section 57 of the ICT Act.

Contacted, Gazi Rabiul Islam, additional superintendent of police in Faridpur, told this newspaper that the case was registered after they consulted the police headquarters and took permission in this regard.

He said Vishnu told him that he was not the owner of the "Bishno Kumar Malo" Facebook account which uploaded the post and he [Vishnu] used an account named "Rahulvishnu".

Earlier, police arrested a journalist in Kurigram under the same section following a case filed against him for allegedly taking a "screenshot" of a Facebook post involving the president and the prime minister, and for showing it to the plaintiff and some other local people.

The arrestee was Anisur Rahman, 33, a correspondent of the Daily Sangbad in the district.

Journalists have long been demanding repeal of the provision amid its widespread misuse for curbing freedom of speech. They say the section is so vaguely worded that it can be misused to silence journalists and social media users.

Law Minister Anisul Huq on several occasions said the section would be repealed. However, cases under the section have been piling up, and around two dozen journalists have already been sued under the act since March.

Against this backdrop, Inspector General of Police AKM Shahidul Hoque in August instructed all police stations to consult the legal wing of the police headquarters before registering any case under the act.

Under the ICT Act, police submit either a charge sheet or a final report after investigating alleged violations to the Cyber Tribunal in Dhaka, the lone tribunal to deal with such cases.

According to a source at the tribunal, the court received 763 reports

until July 30 this year from police since the amendment of the law in 2013 with provisions for harsher punishments. Nearly 90 percent of the cases were filed under section 57 and a majority of them by ruling party men.

The actual number of cases is much higher as the police file reports with the court only after completing their investigations into the accusations.

Of the 763 cases, 205 have so far been disposed of.

In the first seven months of this year alone, the tribunal received 342 reports. Of them, 300 were filed under section 57.

Extramarital

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Shahin, a construction worker, along with his wife Masuma Begum and their only child fled in the early hours of Thursday, the officials told The Daily Star yesterday.

Contacted, Mostaq Ahmed, deputy commissioner (Gulshan division) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, said, "We've made a remarkable progress in the probe."

But he did not go into detail. Police arrested the couple in Khulna early yesterday.

A Badda police team arrested prime suspect Shahin and his wife with the help of Batiaghata police in Khulna, Ashrafal Kabir, senior assistant commissioner (Badda zone) of DMP, told this correspondent.

On Thursday, Jamil's brother Shamim Sheikh filed a case against Shahin and Arzina in connection with the double murder.

The murder of Jamil, 38, a private car driver by profession, and his daughter Nurat, a class-III student, took place on Thursday, barely 12 hours into the killings of a mother and her son at their house in Kakrail.

When Arzina's husband and their daughter were found murdered, Arzina told locals that four unknown people stormed their house and killed the two, said Jamil's another brother Imrul Islam Ibrahim.

Ladakh gets

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the herculean task, Chief Engineer, Project Himank, Brigadier D M Purvatham, said constructing the road at the altitude of over 19,300 feet was filled with life threatening challenges.

He said the climate at the location is always adverse for construction activities.

"During peak summers, temperature hovers around minus 10-20 degrees Celsius, and in winters, it dips to minus 40 degrees. Oxygen level at the altitude is 50 per cent less than at normal places," Purvatham said.

"Efficiency of machines and manpower declines by 50 percent due to harsh climate and less oxygen level. Also, machine operators have to come down every 10 minutes for oxygen," he said.

The brigadier said logistics was another major challenge at such an altitude.

"Taking equipment at such a height, repairing and maintaining it is a major

task since equipment face a lot of breakdowns," he said.

Purvatham said because of this gradation, the personnel faced serious health problems like loss of memory, eyesight and high blood pressure.

"Such a construction does not come without a cost, but given the national and strategic importance of the road, our men and machinery worked overnight to meet the targets set out by Director General, Border Roads," he said.

Pardeep Raj, Commander 753 BRITE, who looks after road construction of this sector, said the BRO personnel were acclimatised through a tedious process and lot of training before being assigned the job.

The Project Himank has already constructed roads like Khardangu La at an altitude of 17,900 ft and Changla Pass at 17,695 ft in Leh by connecting Nobra valley and Durbuk valley in the cold desert.