



Police seizing cots and tables hawkers had set up on the pavements of a street in Rail Gate-2 area near Bangabandhu Road in Narayanganj yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Gunmen attack

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kitchen, appeared to have included suicide bombers.

According to one witness, who did not want to be quoted by name, the attackers took some hotel staff and guests hostage but there was no immediate claim of responsibility for the latest in a long series of attacks to hit Kabul.

The hotel, located on a hilltop and heavily protected like most public buildings in the city, was previously attacked by Taliban fighters in 2011.

It is one of Kabul's two main luxury hotels and had been due to host an information technology conference on Sunday.

More than 100 IT managers and engineers were on site when the attack occurred, Ahmad Waheed, an official at the telecommunications ministry, said.

On Thursday, the U.S. embassy in Kabul issued a warning to U.S. citizens, saying "We are aware of reports that extremist groups may be planning an attack against hotels in Kabul".

Although the NATO-led Resolute Support mission says the Taliban has come under pressure after the United States increased assistance to Afghan security forces and stepped up air strikes against the insurgents, security remains precarious.

As pressure on the battlefield has increased, security officials have warned that the danger of attacks on high profile targets in Kabul and other cities would increase as insurgents sought to undermine confidence in security.

After repeated attacks in Kabul, notably an incident in May last year in which a truck bomber outside the German embassy killed at least 150 people, security has been further tightened in government and diplomatic areas.

While it shares the same name, the hotel in Kabul is not part of InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG), which issued a statement in 2011 saying that "the hotel Intercontinental in Kabul is not part of IHG and has not been since 1980".

Lakehead

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Station yesterday evening.

Mentioning the GD, Sub-Inspector Nuruzzaman told The Daily Star that Khaled was returning home from school. Some people told him to go with them and took him away in a microbus, the SI added.

Khaled, also the managing director of RM Group Ltd, a company that supplies construction equipment and materials, purchased the school in March last year.

Contacted, Sabbir Shetu, manager (HRM and Admin Division) at the RM Group Ltd, said they would talk to the media after consulting their lawyer.

On November 7, the district administration of Dhaka sealed off Dhamondi and Gulshan branches of the school, closing all activities on allegations of patronising militancy, inspiring extremist views and helping militant outfits form.

The Supreme Court later ordered the school to be reopened with a new board of directors comprised of military officials and the Dhaka divisional commissioner chairing.

On January 13, the school was reopened.

The school was co-founded in 2000 by Rizwan Haroon, who has been dubbed as a top militant in some media reports, and Jenifer Ahmed, wife of alleged Hizb ut-Tahrir coordinator and Dhaka University teacher Syed Golam Mowla.

Talking to this newspaper on November 7, Khaled said they had bought the school not knowing the allegations against its management. He had claimed to have brought changes to the entire management of the school.

Quader faces ire

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According to witnesses, Quader was discussing about district committee with some other senior leaders on the first floor of the new building of the party president's Dhanmondi office around 6:00pm.

At that time, some former BCL leaders, who are deprived of post, started demonstration in front of the room.

At one stage, they tried to enter the room, but it was locked from inside. Then the demonstrators chanted slogans for cancelling the committees.

Quader was confined in the room for more than half an hour, the witnesses said. Later party central leaders Jagangir Kabir Nanak, Khalid Mahmud Chowdhury and SM Kamal Hossain appeared there and brought the situation under control.

Quader then said the recently announced sub-committees are put on hold and assured that new sub-committees with dedicated former

BCL leaders would be announced within three months, said party insiders.

Later, the deprived former BCL leaders staged demonstration in front of the party office. They surrounded Quader's car when he was leaving the office, witnesses said.

But, no party leaders were ready to make comments on this.

An agitating former BCL leader said, "It was not any movement, rather we came here being driven by our moral responsibility to prevent intruders into Sheikh Hasina's Awami League."

Contacted, Officer-in-Charge (Investigation) of Dhanmondi Police Station Parvez Islam, told The Daily Star a tense situation arose at AL's Dhanmondi office over a committee, but police rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control.

Asked whether Obaidul Quader was confined, he replied in the negative.

Ticked off by test order

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"The consumption of such metals beyond the permissible limit may damage the kidneys of infants and the elderly and harm liver cells. It may also cause damage to the eyes and ears in the long run," Chittagong Civil Surgeon Azizur Rahman Siddique told The Daily Star.

This is the first time in the country that the food safety authorities have decided to test fish for detecting presence of such metals. Normally, tests on fish are done to detect hazardous substances such as formalin.

Following the directive, eight importers of the fish worth about Tk 15 crore are not taking the delivery, port officials said.

"They fear that there might be high levels of hazardous metals in the fish, for which they may face legal action," said one official.

The fish are now being stored in refrigerated containers in the port yard.

On January 6, the fish importers wrote to the BFSA, saying it would be a great hassle for them if the test was done in Dhaka because it would take a long time. They also sent a letter to the Chittagong customs commissioner the next day.

Later on January 11, the authorities decided to conduct the test in the lab of the Department of Fisheries (DoF) in Chittagong. But the test could not be done as the importers are not showing up to take their consignments.

Mohammad Shahjahan Ali, quality control lab in-charge of the DoF (Chittagong zone), said they could detect the presence of the four metals in question within a week, which is less time-consuming compared to the tests done in Dhaka.

Safar Ali, proprietor of Anika Enterprise, a clearing and forwarding agent, said the sudden decision by the authorities created a big problem for the importers.

"One importer brought 200 tonnes of fish through me, but I am not taking the delivery. I hope that the authorities will reconsider their decision," he added.

Importers and their agents also claimed that they were singled out by the port authorities, which will cost them a large sum of money in demurrage and electricity bills.

"The port authorities can order such tests, but it will affect our business badly. As a result, fish prices will go up," said Soumendu Basu, general secretary of Sea Fish Importers Association, also an importer.

Under the rules, importers must collect their consignments within 30 days of their arrival.

On expiry of this timeframe, the port authorities will write to the importers to collect their fish within the next 15 days. In case they fail, the port authorities will run the mandatory test on the fish on their own initiative. If the test result is negative, the fish will likely be sold in auction, port sources said.

But the fish will be destroyed if hazardous metals beyond permissible limits are found. In that case, the

importers will face fine or cancellation of licence, if they are found involved in applying harmful preservatives in the fish, they added.

On Monday, the food safety authorities held a meeting with the importers and officials of other relevant authorities to find a solution, said Md Mahbub Kabir, a member of the BFSA.

"We will carry out the testing for three months. If we get satisfactory results, the rules will be relaxed. Since testing takes time, importers can collect their consignments, leaving some samples for the test. But they will not be able to sell the fish until the test results come," he said.

Asked, Mahbub said their officials would monitor the market to ensure that these fish could not hit the market.

The DFSA has also assigned its own officials to collect samples from the port following allegations that importers and their agents alter the samples on way to the labs.

It was not clear from where these consignments came, but about 90 percent of Bangladesh's fish imports come from Myanmar, the Maldives and Oman. Nearly half of the total import volume comes from Oman, according to port sources.

In the first five months of the current fiscal year, 16,032 tonnes of fish worth Tk 66.36 crore have been imported. For the last four years, the average annual fish imports through Chittagong Port stood at 48,000 tonnes, port officials said.

The food safety watchdog, which began its journey in February 2015, said it was urgent to take quick measures to ensure safe food to attain the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.

Currently, lab tests are mandatory for more than 500 types of goods, including chemicals, food items, fruits, seeds, textile goods and scrap for detection of various harmful substances.

Facebook

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program won't affect how much news people see in their feed, according to the company.

"The hard question we've struggled with is how to decide what news sources are broadly trusted in a world with so much division," Zuckerberg said. "We could try to make that decision ourselves, but that's not something we were comfortable with. We considered asking outside experts, which would take the decision out of our hands but would likely not solve the objectivity problem."

The company said the move won't impact publishers based on how big they are or their ideological leanings.

The scores won't be made public and will be one of many factors the company will consider when weighing news feed placement. The new scoring system is only rolling out in the US to start, but the company plans to eventually expand it globally.

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No action yet

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Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan on Thursday pledged to take action against those who brandished firearms and took laws in their hands during the Tuesday's incident.

A leader of Narayanganj Jubo League, Niazul on Wednesday through his brother filed a general diary (GD) with Narayanganj Sadar Police Station, said Abdur Razzaq, acting officer-in-charge of the police station.

Asked about the whereabouts of Niazul, the OC said police were investigating the complaints mentioned in the GD.

In the GD, the Jubo League leaders said he lost his pistol in the attack by the mayor's supporters. He accused 17 people of beating him up when he was on his way to the Narayanganj Club. He also complained that the suspects snatched a pistol from him when he pulled it in self-defence.

Ivy on Wednesday alleged that Shamim wanted to kill her and accordingly, sent one of his close aides Niazul to carry out the mission.

Refuting the allegation, Shamim said Niazul was not a criminal and he wielded his pistol in self-defence.

NO CASE FILED YET

Police were yet to file any case in connection with Tuesday's incident till last night.

Legal experts said police can file a case without waiting for anyone to do so and can carry out an investigation to identify the criminals if they were really sincere and were allowed to work without political interference.

Meanwhile, the ruling AL was yet to take any organisational action against anyone involved in the attack. Party General Secretary Obaidul Quader earlier said he had summoned Shamim and Ivy to Dhaka.

Mohibul Hasan Chowdhury Naufel, organising secretary (Dhaka divisional) of AL, told this newspaper that sitting with them would not be possible now as Ivy was sick.

Now undergoing treatment at Labaid Hospital in the capital, the condition of Ivy, who suffered a brain haemorrhage, improved yesterday, according to doctors.

LOCALS STAGE PROTEST

A group of city residents yesterday formed a human chain in front of the Narayanganj Press Club demanding arrest of Niazul, Nizam and others involved in Tuesday's attack.

Organised under the banner of Narayanganj Sangskritik Jote (Cultural Alliance of Narayanganj), speakers at the programme said Nizam was present during the inauguration of the "Unnayan Mela" by the deputy commissioner of Narayanganj on January 12.

They questioned police's inaction over arresting the attackers of Mayor Ivy and her supporters.

"It is quite clear that the authorities are acting in a biased way in favour of a vested quarter," said Mahbubul Rahman Masum, president of Narayanganj Press Club.

4 killed

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Sensing police presence, some "criminals" fled the spot. However, two bullet-riddled bodies were found there, he claimed.

Police recovered two shotguns, two bullets and five other weapons from the spot, he said.

However, Majid Member, one of the locals in Nongarpur, said they did not hear any gunshots during the time of the incident.

Abu Saleh, officer-in-charge of Jhikargacha Police Station, said they rushed to Chapatala area around 4:00am, getting information that two groups of criminals had locked into a gunfight there.

The other two bodies were recovered from the spot. The rest of the criminals had fled by the time police reached there, he claimed.

A foreign pistol, two bullets and other weapons were recovered from the spot, he added.

Kamal Hossain of the locality said they heard gunshots in deep night. He said it was a lonely area.

Stalker stabs

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Mymensingh Medical College Hospital. The attacker managed to flee, said SA Newazi, additional police superintendent (ASP) in the district.

While trying to save herself, the girl suffered serious injuries to her hands and neck, said M Kamruzzaman Manik, a physician of the hospital's orthopedic surgery department. She had an operation and might be released a week later.

The victim's mother has filed a case against Kashem with Kotwali Police Station.

Teachers

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he added.

With the demand of nationalisation of their institutions, their strike waged into the sixth day yesterday with at least 85 of them falling sick and at least 25 being hospitalised.

Several hundred teachers began the indefinite hunger strike at Jatiya Press Club on January 15 to press home their demand. Earlier, they staged a sit-in for five days since January 10.

According to the forum, there are 39,092 private secondary and higher secondary institutions with 506,637 teachers.

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Akheri Munajat today

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The second day began with delivery of sermon by Maulana Mohammad Hossain of Bangladesh after Fazr prayers yesterday. Sheikh Ismail of Saudi Arabia and Maulana Zakir Hossain of Bangladesh gave sermons after the Zohr prayers.

Bangladeshi scholars Maulana Rabibul Haque and Maulana Zobayer delivered sermons respectively after Asr and Magrib prayers.

Two devotees have meanwhile died during the second phase. They are identified as Mobarak Hossain alias Mohor Ali, 65, of Jamalpur and Shahidul Islam, 56, of Keraniganj in Dhaka.

Chitta Ranjan Das, a physician at Tongi Government Hospital, said the two devotees died due to old-age complications and breathing problems. In the first phase, five devotees including a Malaysian died.

Around 4,500 foreigners from 80 countries and several lakh local devotees from 14 districts took part in the second phase, said Gazipur Deputy Commissioner Dewan Muhammad Humayun Kabir.

ROAD DIVERSION

The stretch of Chandra intersection to Tongi Bridge on Dhaka-Mymensingh

highway would remain closed today due to the Akheri Munajat, said Superintendent of Police in Gazipur Harun-ur-Rashid.

Besides, the stretches of Majukhan Bridge to Station Road and Kamarpara Bridge to Munnu Textile Mill Gate on Kaliganj-Tongi Road would also be off limits, the SP said at a briefing yesterday.

He added 1