



An Iraqi protester holds up a national flag during a demonstration in Basra yesterday. Dozens of demonstrators were wounded in southern Iraq today in clashes with police as protests over unemployment and a lack of basic services entered a second week, officials said.

PHOTO: AFP

Jubo Samity leader shot dead in Khagrachhari

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khagrachhari

The general secretary of Jubo Samity, youth wing of Jana Sanghati Samity (MN Larma), of Taindong Union unit was shot dead early yesterday in Khagrachhari.

Criminals shot Shanti Bijoy Chakma, 40, in front of his home around 5:30am as he was coming out of his house in Sorbayshwar Para of Taimandang union under Matiranga upazila.

He died on the spot. Jana Sanghati Samity (MN Larma) has blamed United Peoples Democratic Front (UPDF) for this killing which UPDF has denied.

The incident took place some 50 kilometres from Matiranga upazila sadar, near Bangladesh-India border.

Matiranga Police station Officer-in-Charge (OC) Syed Zakir Hossain confirmed the incident and said that police has already visited the spot. They are taking necessary steps according to the law, he said.

Two other people have been killed over the last four days and an upazila chairman attacked by miscreants in Khagrachhari district.

One UPDF worker and one Jana Sanghati Samity (MN Larma) worker were shot dead and Khagrachhari sadar upazila council Chairman Chanchu Moni Chakma was wounded in a separate attack.

Slingshot-armed

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what little protection they had against the criminal organisations in Verracruz. In Alvarado, the officers were armed with slingshots and rocks.

Bogar Ruiz Rosas, the mayor of Alvarado, protested the decision to have his local police force disarmed by organizing a symbolic handover event where he issued police their new sidearms – slingshots and rocks. During this event, Rosas argued that most of those officers who failed their control tests did so because the department is currently made up of mostly newly recruited officers.

"Today we delivered slingshots to our municipal police," the mayor told reporters present at the handover event. "The citizen governor made the decision to take all the weapons, which disqualified him completely, as it violates our autonomy. It's clear to us that this is a totally political issue and we have to be prepared to carry out our work, professionally, as you have seen us do it."

Photos of the Alvarado police officers wearing their unusual sidearms and videos of Mayor Ruiz Rosas handing them out went viral on Mexican social media, and prompted a response from the Verracruz government. In an official statement, governor Ángel Yunes Linares warned policemen in Alvarado that they cannot continue doing their job unarmed and that continuing to do so would be against the law, and they could be subject to prosecution.

But don't slingshots count as weapons in the right hands? Plus, this wouldn't be the first time Mexican police would have to fight crime with slingshots. In 2007, over 60 slingshots were issued to officers in the violent border city of Tijuana, after their firearms had been confiscated by army soldiers, on allegations of collusion with drug traffickers.

Plot on to keep Khaleda

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"The government is hatching a deep-rooted conspiracy to remove Khaleda Zia and Tarique Rahman from the party's leadership. It is trying to add a similar article to the RPO which the BNP revoked from its party charter," said BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir.

Addressing a press conference at the party's Nayapaltan central office, Fakhrul called upon the government to shun this path for the sake of holding the next general election under a non-party neutral administration.

"Arrange the next general election under a non-party neutral government returning to the path of democracy," he said.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Wednesday in parliament made some "bizarre, fictitious and meaningless" comments against Khaleda for scrapping section seven of the party charter, Fakhrul said.

"The premier's remarks against our party chief in this regard were nothing but propaganda. It is also a part of a deep-rooted conspiracy," said Fakhrul, blaming the government for "destroying the country's democracy".

The section seven of the party's charter was amended at the sixth national council held on March 19, 2016, and it was later submitted to the Election Commission, he added.

BNP TO HOLD DEMO
The BNP will demonstrate across the country, including the capital, on Friday, demanding release of party chief Khaleda from jail and better treatment for her.

"We hope the authorities concerned will take necessary steps to allow us to exercise our democratic rights," Fakhrul said.

Fakhrul said the programme would be held at all district and upazila headquarters on that day, which would also be meant for registering the party's protest against "the government's inhuman attitude towards Khaleda".

As part of the protest, the BNP will stage a demonstration in front of its Nayapaltan central office around

3:00pm on the day.

Khaleda's condition is deteriorating gradually, but the government is not allowing her to receive treatment at a specialised hospital of her choice, said Fakhrul, warning that the government would be held responsible if anything bad happened to her.

On February 8, a special Dhaka court convicted Khaleda and sentenced her to five years' imprisonment in the Zia Orphanage Trust graft case.

In another development, the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA), dominated by pro-BNP lawyers, yesterday once again demanded that the government send Khaleda to United Hospital for treatment.

"Khaleda Zia was the prime minister of the country three times, and she is the chairperson of the largest democratic political party, BNP. The government wants to push her to a slow death by keeping her in confinement for a long period of time, which is very unfortunate and condemnable," said SCBA President Zainul Abedin.

He was speaking at a press conference at the SCBA auditorium in Dhaka yesterday afternoon.

"Khaleda Zia has been groaning in her bed for some days for being ill. On the one side, she is not being provided with treatment; on the other side, no-one is being allowed to meet her. Yesterday [Saturday], her elder sister was allowed to enter the jail to meet her, but she [Khaleda's sister] could not meet her. It means that Khaleda is so sick that she cannot get up from bed," the SCBA president said.

Zainul said Khaleda earlier suffered a mild stroke.

"Then we had demanded that the government send her to United Hospital for her treatment. But the government has held her in confinement without giving her treatment," he said.

Zainul said Khaleda got bail from the apex court in the case she had been convicted. But the government was making her confinement longer by showing her arrested in political cases one after another, he alleged.

Traders call strike at Benapole port

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Traders, led by seven business bodies, at Benapole Land Port yesterday stopped offloading goods from trucks and called for an indefinite strike protesting Border Guard Bangladesh personnel taking permanent position at the custom's weighbridge.

The business organisation leaders met custom officials in the afternoon, demanding withdrawal of the BGB from the weighbridge. The business organisations called the strike in the morning.

Emdadul Haque Lata, general secretary of C&F Agents Association at Benapole Land Port, said export and import business was conducted under the custom's act and they would continue with the strike.

Lt Col Ariful Haque, commanding officer of 49 BGB Battalion, said they took the position at the land port weighbridge for inspection as per the directive of the home ministry.

Myanmar talks

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She said the safety and security of Rohingyas were very important for their return to Myanmar. The international community would have to work for ensuring their protection and safety, she told the premier.

Kerry highly appreciated the social safety net programme and women empowerment of Bangladesh.

PM's daughter and eminent autism activist Saima Wazed Hossain, Principal Secretary to PM Nojibur Rahman and PMO Secretary Sajjadul Hassan were present.

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she contacted her brother the last time over his mobile phone on Saturday afternoon.

"He went to Fakirapool in the evening. He has been traceless since then. Plainclothes men were following him [Tarek]," she said quoting Tarek's friends.

"As he got involved in the [quota reform] movement, he started staying away from home somewhere in the capital since the Eid-ul-Fitr to avoid arrest," Tanjila added.

Hasan Al Mamum, convener of the platform, said he could not reach Tarek over his mobile phone since Saturday night.

"I talked to him over the phone around 8:00 o'clock that night when he went to Fakirapool to get a banner for today's [Sunday] programme. But I could not reach him afterwards," he added.

Mamun said he also talked to Tarek's friends with whom he stays in the capital.

"They don't have any clue where Tarek is now," he added. Contacted, Devdas Bhattacharya, additional commissioner (DB) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, said they didn't detain Tarek.

"But we are looking for him," he said without giving details.

Asked, Najmul Islam, additional deputy commissioner of the DMP's Cyber Security Unit, also denied arresting the reformist leader.

EC will hold fair elections

Says Shahriar Alam

UNB, Dhaka

The Election Commission, with the support of all political parties, the administration and other stakeholders, will be able to hold an "inclusive, fair and neutral" general election by the end of this year, State Minister for Foreign Affairs M Shahriar Alam said.

He made the remark while addressing as the chief guest at a reception marking the French National Day on Saturday evening. French Ambassador to Bangladesh Marie-Annick Bourdin also spoke on the occasion.

The state minister said Bangladesh considered all human rights as universal, indivisible, inter-related, interdependent and mutually reinforcing.

"The fundamental rights envisaged in the constitution of Bangladesh reflect many of the human rights prescribed by international human rights law," he said.

Bangladesh is a country with rich ethnic, religious and cultural diversity, Shahriar mentioned.

Bangladesh encourages the contribution of civil society and NGOs to national socio-economic development as well as to the promotion and protection of human rights initiatives, he said.

"I am confident that the diversity and depth of our relations will continue and widen, bringing tangible outcome and mutual benefits for our two peoples," he said.

He wished the continued happiness and well-being of the friendly people of the French Republic and everlasting friendship and good relations between France and Bangladesh.

French Ambassador Bourdin said Bangladesh and France could do

more together in consolidating democracy through free and fair elections, as well as inclusive, and in defending the human rights of all women and men in the world, as well as in their respective countries.

She said they were convinced that two countries could do and achieve a lot more together in ensuring sustainable development for all, implementing the 2030 Agenda and assisting each other in implementing international commitments.

She added that the two friendly countries could do a lot in contributing to peace and stability, as both countries hold shared views on a number of issues of concern, and were active contributors to peacekeeping operations.

The ambassador talked about two countries' role in promoting the importance of education and diversity of languages and cultures, in which are rooted the identity, the sense of belonging, and individual rights of every citizen.

"They have been and remain key factors in our respective history and fight for emancipation," she said.

Bourdin, while sharing a series of announcements, said President Emmanuel Macron invited leaders from all countries who contributed troops to the 1st World War, and Bangladesh had also been invited, to commemorate the 1918 armistice, on the 11th of November.

She said they would keep on supporting Bangladesh economic development through their ODA (official development assistance) and technical assistance, as well as through private sector companies.

Current and former ministers, diplomats, editors, civil society members and business leaders were present on the occasion.

Work on one road

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road, causing traffic congestion at peak hours. The road is now in bad shape and has become a major problem for city dwellers, said Kusum Dewan, additional commissioner (AC) of CMP (traffic).

In this regard, Lieutenant Colonel Mohiuddin Ahmed, chief engineer of CCC, said that one side of the PC road is still open for vehicle while development work is going on the other side.

"The open side is wide enough for vehicles to pass through. But makeshift structures set up by vendors have narrowed the road down. If law enforcement authorities had taken necessary action, the condition of traffic would not be like this," he said.

Kusum Dewan however disagreed, saying that the open side, also in need of repair, was being used by vehicles coming from both directions.

"There is no doubt that the pressure on DT road is due to the development work on PC road. We deploy one platoon of police everyday to control traffic on the DT road. If CCC could finish the work faster, such a crisis wouldn't have occurred," said the AC.

Mohiuddin admitted to the deteriorating condition of the road, saying that temporary renovation work is regularly underway.

"As this road was not meant to be used by heavy vehicles, it is normal for it to not withstand this kind of pressure. That's why we are conducting regular renovation work on the road," he said.

Upon a recent visit to the DT road, this correspondent saw piles of bricks stacked into the potholes and carpeting being done over them.

About this, the CCC engineer said the bricks had to be stacked as a base under the carpeting and was temporary.

"Since vehicles are on the move all day long on this road, we have to go with temporary procedures. For permanent renovation work, we need to shut the road down, which is not possible now," he added.

He also said that the CCC hopes to begin the necessary renovation work on DT road after the work on PC road is completed by December this year.

However, the sufferings of the commuters are nowhere near its end.

"It is a nightmare if you go out on this road. Reaching anywhere on time is a sheer impossibility. A half-hour long journey on this road takes almost two hours," said Tanvir Zakaria Chowdhury, a dweller at Dewanhat area in the city.

Adding to this, the 560 metre-long overpass at Dewanhat junction of DT road, which was constructed by Chittagong Development Authority (CDA) at the cost of Tk 3000 lakh, is also in terrible condition with large

potholes created on it and the ramps on both sides battered.

Hundreds of inter district buses, trucks and covered vans use this overpass at night, creating traffic congestion even in the darker hours.

Abdus Salam, chairman of CDA, said that the Dewanhat junction overpass has the capacity of sustaining 50 tonnes of pressure while vehicles are on the move.

"Constant and long term halt on the overpass has affected the carpeting and the ramps at both sides. It was not meant to hold the vehicles on it," said Salam.

"Although this will not cause any permanent damage to the overpass as the carpeting and the layer on the ramps can be treated, the public suffering, however, is the most important thing to be dealt with right now," he said.

Jubo League

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College morgue for autopsy. Rashed's wife Kazi Mousumi said Rashed had enmity with Banani JL Joint Convener Yusuf Sardar Sohe over the last three years.

She told this correspondent that Sohel and Rashed were relatives and used to be good friends, but Rashed distanced himself from Sohel after he became an alcoholic.

Sohel was very bitter about it and "a conflict arose between them."

She added that Sohel had beaten Rashed up on multiple occasions in the past three years.

Locals and other family members of the slain JL leader corroborated the account.

This correspondent tried to contact Sohel over the phone and visited his office and home, but failed to reach him.

Mousumi filed a case with Banani Police Station accusing Sohel and several others, said AC Rafiqul.

"We are conducting raids to arrest Sohel and his associates," he added.

A number of locals and family members said Rashed and Sohel grew up together. They went to South Africa together and stayed there for six years after the BNP-led government assumed power in 2001.

On September 16, 2016, Sohel was arrested for shooting a rickshaw puller in the leg. He was released on bail three days later.

In 2012, Sohel was accused of shooting three JL men, including then JL general secretary Zakir Hossain in the area, on July 1 of that year.

Neighbours said Sohel and Rashed used to be the part of a group. But rifts arose within the group after they parted ways.

This newspaper tried to communicate with the committee members of Banani Thana JL, but everyone declined to comment.

Nigeria's ruling party wins key state gubernatorial

AFP, Lagos

A candidate from Nigeria's ruling party won a key state gubernatorial on Sunday, the electoral body said, marking an early victory for President Muhammadu Buhari ahead of general elections next year.

Challenger Kayode Fayemi, former solid minerals minister of the All Progressives Congress (APC), won the fiercely-contested election in Ekiti state, defeating incumbent Peter Ayo Fayose from the opposition People's Democratic Party (PDP).

John Olukayode Fayemi of the APC, having satisfied the requirement of the law and scored the highest number of votes, is hereby declared the winner," said Abel Olayinka, Independent National Electoral Commission officer, in a statement.

The election, which the APC won by 19,338 votes, was free from violence but vote-buying was an issue, said international observers on the ground. "Money rain in Ekiti as PDP, APC

entice voters with cash," wrote the Vanguard, a Nigerian newspaper.

"Unfortunately, I think it has become part of the system here," said Sentell Barnes, from the International Republican Institute, a US pro-democracy group.

"Before people would stuff ballots, but now that's harder to do with the card reader, so now you find people using money to influence people."

Nigeria's 2015 presidential election, in which Buhari made history by becoming the first opposition candidate to unseat an incumbent, was widely praised as free and fair.

Analysts were watching the high-stakes gubernatorial elections as litmus test of Buhari's popularity and the strength of Nigeria's young democracy.

"There's a perception that the ruling party is determined to hold onto power next year and the elections in Ekiti and Osun will serve... as a test of how much force they are willing to use," said Cheta Nwanze, of Lagos-based SBM Intelligence.