

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE DAY

Detectives pick up Naomi in Comilla

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A team of detectives from Dhaka yesterday arrested Mizanur Rahman Naomi in Barura upazila of Comilla in connection with his alleged phone conversation with BNP leader Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury, said an officer of Dhaka Metropolitan Police.

His family members told our Comilla correspondent that plainclothes men picked him up around 5:00am from his aunt's house at Deora village.

Naomi is the son of Siddikur Rahman Suruj, a BNP leader and councillor of ward-20 of Comilla City Corporation.

Amir Khasru, a BNP standing committee member and former minister, was sued on Saturday under the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Act and the Special Powers Act after a record of what sounded like a phone conversation went viral on social media.

A Chhatra League leader in Chittagong filed the case with Kotwali Police Station accusing Amir Khasru of attempting to create anarchy, said police.

The Daily Star could not independently verify the phone conversation.



Actress Nawshaba on 4-day remand

Actress Quazi Nawshaba Ahmed, who was held on Saturday night for spreading rumour on Facebook, was placed on a four-day remand yesterday in a case filed under the ICT Act.

Metropolitan Magistrate Mazharul Haque of Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate's Court passed the order after police produced her before the court with a seven-day remand prayer.

She was held from Uttara for allegedly spreading rumours on social media about the student protests with a motive to create anarchy in the country and to confuse people, police said.

Teacher held for 'spreading rumour'

Police yesterday arrested Nusrat Jahan Sonia, 26, an assistant teacher of Dokkhin Tiakhalai Government Primary School, at her home in Kalapara area of Patuakhali for allegedly "spreading rumour" on Facebook about the student protests.

Ali Ahmed, officer-in-charge of Kalapara Police Station, said police filed a case under the ICT Act accusing her.

The OC added that police were investing the matter.

Attackers snatch journos' helmets

Many journalists covering yesterday's attacks on demonstrating students near Science Laboratory intersection said their helmets were taken away from their parked motorcycles by the attackers.

Helmets of three journalists of The Daily Star were snatched at the time. One of them saw a man taking his helmet from his parked motorcycle.

As the journalist asked why the helmet was taken, the attacker hurled abuse at him and walked away with it.



Carrying sticks and iron rods, alleged ruling Awami League men patrol the Science Lab intersection. Inset, freelance photographer Rahat Karim bleeds badly after he was attacked by alleged Chhatra League men in the area. PHOTO: STAR

Pounced again

FROM PAGE 1 Hossain Sarder said, "I did not see any sharp weapon."

Asked why they didn't take action during the attack on demonstrators, he said, "We were confused as to who is what."

On assaults on journalists in the presence of police, he said, "No journalist came up with complaint to me."

About firing teargas shells, he said the protesters were headed towards the AL president's office and police had to scatter them.

It was the eighth day of the unprecedented student movement sparked by the killing of two students -- Dia Khanam Mim and Abdul Karim Rajib -- in a road crash on July 29.

Yesterday, students took position at House Building of Uttara, Khilkhet, Kakoli, Mirpur and Rampura to press home their demand.

Privately-run buses were kept off the city roads. Only a few government-run BRTC buses and CNG-run auto-rickshaws were seen on the streets, and commuters suffered for want of transport services.

Meanwhile, the city police yesterday began "Traffic Week" to conduct drives against unfit vehicles, fake licences and drivers without proper documents amid an undeclared "strike" of bus owners.

On Saturday, in a dangerous turn of event, at least 150 people including journalists and pedestrians were wounded during a clash triggered by attacks on students campaigning for safe roads. Rumours of death and sexual harassment further aggravated the situation.

Protesting the attacks, several thousand youths began a march from Shahbagh towards Science Laboratory intersection around noon yesterday. Earlier, they kept Shahbagh intersec-

tion blocked for around one and half hours from 11:00am.

They joined other protesters at Science Lab area around 12:40pm and headed for Jhigatola area through Dhanmondi road-2.

Some of the protesters formed a human shield at Jhigatola bus stand as the procession was about to take a U-turn. But some of the protesters were trying to move towards the AL president's office while some sat on the road chanting slogans seeking justice, reported two of our correspondents.

Right at the time, policemen took position near the AL office and lobbed teargas shells to disperse the protesting youths. However, the students retaliated by throwing stones and brick chips at police. Ruling party men were inside the AL office then.

Chased by police, most of the students ran back towards the Science Lab point while several hundred others took shelter in nearby alleys.

Police chased some of the students and charged batons. Later, requested by some media personnel, the law enforcers allowed the trapped students to walk towards Science Lab. Some members of Border Guard Bangladesh took position near Pilkhana gate No 4.

An eerie calm engulfed the area with business establishments and shops shut down.

Ruling party men, mostly BCL activists, equipped with iron rods, sticks, machetes came out of the party office. They caught several persons passing by the party office and beat them up, thinking them to be protesters.

A youth was slapped and beaten up around 2:00pm though he showed his ID card of Dhaka University and told the BCL men that he lives nearby. He was then allowed to go.

The situation turned worse at Science Lab point and nearby roads

leading to Jhigatola. The students had taken position near Star Kabab and some were searching for their friends.

Then a team of around 50 policemen led by Deputy Commissioner Maruf started marching from Pilkhana to Science Lab.

Near Star Kabab point, a group of protesters started chanting slogans when police went on the offensive by lobbing teargas shells.

The policemen came near City College when around 150 supposed BCL men, some with machetes, started shouting at the stranded protesters near Science Lab police box.

Some lower-rank cops looked confused and asked the Ramna DC whether they would take action. Maruf Hossain replied "No". Police remained inactive as the armed men swooped on the protesters.

Around 50 journalists present there were being warned by attackers not to take pictures. They were chased from Science Lab to Happy Arcade shopping mall by ruling party youths brandishing sticks and machetes.

Freelance photographer Rahat Karim and AP photographer AM Ahad were among those beaten up brutally.

In Jhigatola, more and more ruling party men gathered. They also patrolled the area on motorcycles. Police were silent spectators though some of the ruling party men were carrying sharp weapons.

Some BCL activists armed with sharp weapons and sticks chased a nearly 40-year-old man as he tried to capture photos of their procession around 2:15pm. They hurled stones at him, forcing him to take refuge inside Pilkhana.

The BCL men also chased whoever they thought to be protesters.

As the ruling party men started beating journalists, a correspondent of

this paper, caught by them, escaped assault saying one of his relatives is admitted to the Japan Bangladesh Friendship Hospital.

Around 2:30pm, the ruling party men captured a youth wearing punjabi, and dragged him down from a rickshaw passing by the party office towards Simanto Square.

They beat him up with sticks and iron rods until a police official rescued him. He was later taken to the entrance of the party office and minutes later, the officer called a rickshaw for him.

He was seen crying covering his face with hands when the rickshaw was started moving. A little bit later, a teenager wearing a trouser and white shirt was captured by the party men. They let him go after slapping.

Eight injured students took treatment at Dhaka Medical College Hospital while 13 at Popular Hospital.

A group of youths attacked the students of University of Asia Pacific when the latter took position in front of the campus on Green Road near Farmgate in solidarity with the road safety demonstrators.

Witnesses said when several hundred students took position there, Shramik League and Chhatra League men attacked them and pelted stones and brickbats.

The students retaliated with brickbats and the exchange continued for around 15 minutes. At one point, the students went back to the campus. Police then rushed to the spot, witnesses said.

Meanwhile, police barred around 200 students who tried to demonstrate at Mirpur-10 roundabout around 12:15pm. They were also chased allegedly by some ruling party men.

They then took position in front of Dhaka Commerce College at Mirpur-2 for three hours.

Bernicat's motorcade attacked

Ambassador unharmed; two vehicles damaged

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

US Ambassador to Bangladesh Marcia Bernicat's vehicle was attacked by armed men, some on motorcycles, in the capital's Mohammadpur area on Saturday, the US embassy in Dhaka has said.

"The ambassador and her security team departed the area unharmed," said a US embassy statement issued yesterday.

There were no injuries to the ambassador, her drivers, or security staff however, two security vehicles sustained some damage.

"We express our appreciation to the Dhaka Metropolitan Police and security officials for their quick and professional response following the incident," the statement said.

According to media reports, the vehicle carrying the outgoing US ambassador came under attack as it left the house of Shushashoner Jonno Nagorik (Shujan) Secretary Badiul Alam Majumdar in Mohammadpur on SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

Nahid urges students to go back to classes

Teachers fear for students' safety

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Principals and headmasters of different colleges and schools in the capital yesterday expressed their concern over the safety of their students, saying that the pupils might be harassed by transport workers in the coming days.

They also urged the government to take initiatives to resume transport services so that students could attend their classes.

They said this in two views-exchange meetings with Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid at International Mother Language Institute in the capital. The education ministry organised the meetings.

"We opine that three problems -- lack of faith, security and transport -- persist right now. The students who took part in the movement [for safe roads] are now afraid of taking to the streets. We should restore faith in them and their family members and give them security," said Lt Col Md Akhtar Iqbal, principal of Birshreshtha Munshi Abdur Rouf Public College.

At this point, Sohorab Hossain, secretary of education ministry, interrupted him and said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina had already given a directive that "no students be touched".

"How do we give you assurance [of security] after the chief of the government says none of the students be harmed," he said.

Iqbal said, "Even today [Sunday] when our students crossed the [Border Guard Bangladesh Headquarters] 4 no gate at Jhigatola, brick chips were hurled at them. Instantly, we brought SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

How dare you hit my child!

FROM PAGE 1 the right to touch our children.

Hundreds of our children were chased down the streets of Dhaka on Saturday and over 100 of them were beaten up mercilessly. At least 30 more students were injured in similar attacks yesterday. Equipped with sticks, iron rods and machetes, some youths clubbed and chopped students on the streets, as law enforcers stood by as silent spectators. At times, some policemen were seen accompanying these wild goons to attack the students. They even broke into apartments to nab fleeing students before mauling them.

Who are these unruly men? And what's their connection with the police?

The home ministry and police repeatedly asked the students to go home and warned they might become a target of some vested quarters. Do the attacking thugs belong to the vested

quarter that is out to set the non-violent students up against the government? If so, why did not the police take care of these criminals? And what stopped them from saving our children from these unruly people? That should be precisely the job of the police. These policemen should be immediately brought under trial after thorough investigations.

It would be very easy for the top brass of police to identify those criminals and cops in question from photographs and videos that appeared in the media. Police frequently do that to find the real culprits of a crime of this magnitude. Police must come out clean by disowning this misdeed of a handful of them in uniforms. The police force exists to protect people's interest, after all.

What wrong have these students done?

Students were out on the streets because the state has failed to ensure a safe road for them. They are out because no concrete assurance came from the government in the last eight days, since the death of two college students on July 29, when a bus ploughed into the college students boarding another bus.

Aged 7-19, these children exposed only part of the irregularities that are ailing our roads. Drivers without licence or below driving age. Ministers' cars on wrong side of the road. Vehicles without fitness papers. Police officials without driving licence. Violation of U-turn prohibition. They taught their elders what to fix and how. And they did it with due courtesy, politeness and hardly breaking any law of the land.

The only crime, if one likes to call it so, the children may have committed

is that they came out on the streets and made us take their cause seriously. Indeed, traffic movements were hampered to some extent. Then again, traffic movement randomly gets hampered with VIP movement, political agitation and wild-cat transport strike.

The state machinery was expected to show all the patience in the world with these children. Have the elders in power exhausted all the options to salvage the situation? Did they talk with them and try to accommodate their perspective?

In our homes, we frequently manage such awkward situations. We show our patience, talk with our children, give them our perspective, agree to what's agreeable and then move on to solution. Dynamics of a state is no different from those of a family.

Did the state do its part? If not, how could it let a "vested quarter" beat up our

children, and that too in front of police?

It is obvious that parents would come to their children's rescue, at some point of time. Whose purpose would it serve if thousands of parents join the bandwagon of their children on the streets? Not the government's, we can say for sure.

Is the "vested quarter" with help from some cops in question trying to put parents up against the government then?

We the parents know who belong to this vested group. We the journalists know who they are. We, the eyewitnesses, know who they are. We believe police too know who they are.

The government must also know who they are, if it already doesn't. Do the profiling of these attacking thugs and the cops present with them to reconfirm who belong to the vested quarter.

Sooner the government does that the better it is for averting a possible disaster.

Journos attacked while on duty

FROM PAGE 1 At one point, some of them threw brickbats at freelance photographer Rahat Karim who was standing on a nearby footbridge, witnesses said.

Later, the attackers held him by his T-shirt, dragged him down and beat him indiscriminately with rods, sticks and a machete, leaving him wounded.

After they left, Rahat was taken to nearby Popular Hospital, the witnesses said.

The stick-wielding attackers then chased away all the journalists. They also threw brickbats at the news-

men and camera. He was taken to the emergency unit of Lab Aid Hospital.

A video clip that shows Ahad being beaten by the youths went viral yesterday.

It shows Ahad begging repeatedly to let him go but the youths do not stop. At one point, Ahad falls on the ground but the attack continues.

Witnesses said during the attacks, some policemen were standing nearby, but they did nothing to stop the attackers.

Palash of Daily Bonik Barta, Ibnul Asad Zawad of The Daily Janakantha, Rimul of US-based Zuma Press and Enamul Hasan, a photography student of Pathsala South Asian Media Institute, were also injured in similar attacks.

Ahmed Deepto, a staff reporter of Bangla daily Prothom Alo, also came under attack near Science Lab area. He sustained injuries to his back and left hand.

Those who were assaulted yesterday included Nagorik TV reporter Abdullah Shafi, online news portal Sara Bangla reporter Golam Samdani, Prothom Alo photojournalist Shajid Hossain, Nagorik TV's Kamrul Hassan, news portal bdmorning's Abu Shufian Jewel, Naya Diganta's Sharif Hossain, freelance photographers Marjuk Hasan, Hasan Jubayer and N Kayser Hasim. They were attacked in different parts of the city.

A car of private television channel Nagorik TV was vandalised near Science Lab area.

female reporters, were threatened as well, witnesses said, adding the attackers also looked for The Daily Star and Prothom Alo reporters there.

On Saturday, police and alleged BCL men beat up three journalists of The Daily Star and molested another in Jhigatola.

In the same area close to a ruling party office, journalist Faisal Hossain from Channel 24, along with camera person Krishna Sarker, was beaten up around 7:00pm while doing live broadcast.

Meanwhile, police detained two on-duty photo journalists of Counter Foto -- Piyas Biswas and Mashrukh Ahmed -- near Road 4/A yesterday. Another photojournalist of the photo agency -- Nazmul Nahid -- was held the previous day. The three were kept

at Dhanmondi Police Station, its OC Abdul Latif told The Daily Star around 9:30pm.

The Daily Star tried to contact BCL President Rezwanul Haque Chowdhury Shovon and General Secretary Golam Rabbani for comments. Rezwanul's cell phone was found switched off while Rabbani did not pick up the call.

Replying to a query, Ramna Deputy Commissioner Maruf Hossain Sarder said, "I did not see any sharp weapon." Asked why they didn't take action during the attack on demonstrators, he said, "We were confused as to who is what." On assaults on journalists in the presence of police, he said, "No journalist came up with any complaint to me."