

JCD intra-party feud behind Raju murder

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Feud over newly formed committees of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal's (JCD) district and city units was behind the murder of its former leader Foyzul Haque Raju.

Insiders said the feud started after the JCD central committee declared the units on June 13 that led to Saturday night's murder.

The sources claimed present committee members attacked Raju and two others during celebration of the victory of newly elected Sylhet City Corporation Mayor Ariful Haque Choudhury.

The assailants attacked them with sharp weapons and shot them when they were returning home from the celebration, witnesses said.

Raju died at Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital the same night. Injured Jakir Hossain Ujjal and Salah Liton are receiving treatment at the hospital.

His body was handed over to his family after autopsy yesterday and would be buried at his village home,

Mosarraf Hossain, officer-in-charge of Kotwali police, said, adding that no case was filed as of last night.

Raju, 32, was former assistant publicity secretary of Sylhet city unit JCD. He hailed from Shahpur of Rajnagar upazila in Moulvibazar.

The central committee of JCD on June 13 formed a 28-member district committee and 29-member city committee for Sylhet.

Aftaf Hossain Sumon was declared the president and Delwar Hossain Dinar the general secretary of the district unit. For the city unit, Sudeep Jyoti Esh was declared the president and Fazle Rabbi Ahsan the general secretary.

However, eight leaders of the newly formed committees resigned the next day and demanded dissolution of the new committees. They claimed that those were the pocket committees of Khandakar Mukhtadir, adviser of the BNP chairperson.

The central leaders of BNP requested the agitated leaders to calm down until the city polls saying they

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A collapsed portion of a bridge on Patuakhali's Gazalia canal under Galachipa upazila. The structure gave way when a brick-laden trailer was crossing it.

PHOTO: SOHRAB HOSSAIN

ROHINGYA CRISIS UNSC calls meeting on August 28

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The UN Security Council has called for a meeting on August 28 to discuss the ongoing Rohingya crisis, among other issues related to Myanmar.

Diplomatic sources said the Security Council has called for the meeting, to be addressed by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, who has called the Rohingya crisis "ethnic cleansing", to mark the one-year anniversary of Myanmar's violent crackdown on the Rohingyas. Ambassador Karen Pierce, UK's permanent representative to the UN and this month's UNSC president, will chair the briefing session.

She said the UK wants the meeting to focus on gaining "unconditional access" to Myanmar for the UN refugee and development agencies so they can work with the Myanmar and Bangladesh governments "to make a credible plan to get the refugees back home in safety, with dignity and security".

The UNSC meeting is taking place after its last meeting on July 23 when it urged the government of Myanmar to step up its efforts to create conditions conducive to safe, voluntary and dignified return of the Rohingya refugees from Bangladesh.

The UN also asked Myanmar to ensure that the Rohingyas, upon return from Bangladesh, can enjoy all the rights typical for the citizens of any country in the world.

It also stressed the importance of undertaking independent and transparent investigations into allegations of human rights abuses and violations.

In another development, after two months of signing an agreement with UNHCR, the UN refugee agency, and UNDP, Myanmar on August 10 approved the travel of staff of UN agencies who would conduct preliminary assessment in some 23 villages in Rakhine in order to activate the MoU.

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Armed men abduct UP member

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A Union Parishad member was kidnapped by some armed men from his house in Chittagong's Lohagara upazila early yesterday.

The victim is Mozaffar Ahmed, 60, member of Potibil ward under Potibil Union Parishad, said Saiful Islam, officer-in-charge of Lohagara Police Station.

Quoting family members and witnesses, Mohammed Yunus, chairman of Potibil union, told The Daily Star that around 12:15am, some 30 to 40 armed men cordoned off Mozaffar's house in Gowher Chanda village and took him.

The chairman added that Mozaffar's elder son, who is a Saudi expatriate, told him over phone that their family received a phone call in the morning. The caller demanded a ransom of Tk 50 lakh.

After the incident, he informed police and the local administration of the matter, said Yunus.

Confirming the abduction, Abu Aslam, Lohagara upazila nirbahi officer, said he already informed his high-ups, including the deputy commissioner of Chittagong, for taking steps to rescue the UP member.

Aslam, who visited the spot in the evening, said the kidnappers contacted

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BRTA armed

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administration in many districts has already intensified the drives, Mazumder added.

The developments came more than a week after school and college students began demonstrations demanding concrete government steps to improve road safety following deaths of two students in a city road crash on July 29.

The two students of Shaheed Ramiz Uddin Cantonment College were killed on the spot as a Jabal-e-Noor bus ploughed through a crowd while competing with another bus of the same company. The accident ignited fury among students, mostly in their mid-teens, who virtually turned into traffic police to expose the flaws in the country's traffic management.

PERSISTING WORKFORCE SHORTAGE

The BRTA is responsible for issuing driving licences, vehicle registration, route permits, fitness clearance and enforcing traffic rules by conducting mobile courts.

It has 13 posts of executive magistrates to run mobile courts in Dhaka and Chittagong, but most of the posts remained vacant for years, officials said. Maximum six magistrates were posted to BRTA at a time, they added.

"There were only five magistrates at the beginning of this year. However, a female magistrate went on maternity leave three months ago and another magistrate went abroad last week for his father's treatment, bringing down the number to three," an official told The Daily Star yesterday wishing anonymity.

The BRTA on several occasions wrote

to the public administration ministry for more magistrates in vain, insiders said.

Following the students' movement, BRTA once against sought more magistrates and this time the ministry posted eight executive magistrates through the Road Transport and Highway Division, the officials added.

MORE MOBILE COURT DRIVES

As per Thursday's office order, three executive magistrates will join BRTA Chittagong office and the rest will join the headquarters in Dhaka by August 16.

Speaking anonymously, a BRTA official said following the movement, a huge number of service seekers are thronging the three BRTA circle offices in Dhaka to fix their documents or renew those.

The official said they are operating three mobile courts in and around the circle offices to check the brokers. The official alleged that in many cases they did not get proper cooperation from the law enforcers.

Mazumder said the existing number of mobile courts was not enough for such a big city like Dhaka.

"When we start our drive in one area, vehicles avoid the place and go to other areas. Now that will stop. Drives of the mobile courts will increase and will be able to reduce the number of offences by covering more areas," he said.

Besides, BRTA on Thursday wrote to all the deputy commissioners to enhance mobile court drives against errant vehicles and drivers, an official said.

Mazumder added, "We do it regularly. We often give them [deputy commissioners] reminder in this regard."

Eid-ul-Azha

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Allah. But the Almighty in His benign mercy spared Hazrat Ismail (AS) and instead sent a ram to be sacrificed.

To commemorate this historic event, the Muslims all over the world slaughter sacrificial animals and draw inspiration from the unique example of sacrifice to please Allah as shown by two great prophets — Hazrat Ibrahim

(AS) and Hazrat Ismail (AS).

On the occasion, the Muslims across the country will offer prayers in congregations and sacrifice animals in the name of Almighty Allah.

They will offer munajat seeking divine blessings for peace, progress and prosperity of the country as well as the welfare of the Muslim Ummah.



Zion's mangled bicycle beside his body on the road.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Teen's death

FROM PAGE 1

Police started observing Traffic Week to strictly enforce traffic laws amid the demonstrations.

Witnesses and locals of the area alleged that the driver was speeding.

Hearing the news, his fellow students of Collectorate School and College blocked Rangpur-Kurigram road. Villagers joined them soon afterwards.

The protest caused long tailbacks on the road. Around 12 buses and trucks were allegedly attacked and damaged.

When police tried to clear the road, the demonstrators said they would not leave until the driver was arrested.

Two policemen were injured as the protesters hurled brickbats at them.

Police fired rubber bullets, tear shells, and baton-charged around

2:15pm.

Road communication resumed around 3:00pm, said Moktarul Islam, inspector (investigation) of Rangpur Sadar Police station.

SP Mizanur Rahman said driver Sanu of Sadullapur and his assistant Badsha Mia, 35, of Palashbari upazilas in Gaibandha were arrested in the evening.

Sanu had the licence to drive light vehicles, he added.

The bus was seized at Rangpur Bus Terminal around 4:30pm by police.

After the victim's body arrived at Mondalpara village of Rangpur's Badarganj, his grieving father Zahidul Islam said, "I sent him to school for education in Rangpur. It would have been better if he stayed here with me. I would not have this fate then."

BRT route

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So, the promise of being able to hop on a bus at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport and arrive in Keraniganj in less than an hour remains far from reality. Now, it takes about three hours to travel that distance.

The Awami League-led government in its previous tenure repeatedly pledged it would open rapid bus service between the airport and Keraniganj by 2013 and between Gazipur and the airport by 2014.

The officials and transport experts said less than half of the 22km dedicated bus lane for the BRT is now likely to be implemented, between the airport and Mohakhali, a 10km stretch.

The other half, between Mohakhali and Keraniganj, is uncertain with Moghbazar-Mouchak flyover built defying repeated warnings from experts. On top of that, another flyover is proposed between Shantinagar and Keraniganj on the route of the BRT, they said.

The Strategic Transport Plan (STP) recommended BRT as a midterm traffic solution that is affordable, modern, safe, fast, comfortable and environment friendly.

It is to occupy two central lanes -- 6.5-metre wide and cordoned off -- of existing roads and intended for dedicated, disciplined and reliable bus service. The service would discourage the use of rundown buses and private cars and ease the chaotic traffic system by carrying an estimated 15,500 passengers an hour per direction.

The project is now crippled and a casualty of flyovers that facilitate a small number of motorists. It is not going to serve its actual purpose, said Moazzem Hossain, a professor of civil engineering and transport expert at Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet).

He said the BRT plan was prepared and a pre-feasibility study was done in 2008. It must be looked into how the car-oriented flyovers, like the Mouchak flyover built much later, got priority over mass transport facility, said Moazzem who led the pre-feasibility study.

Had a competent planning authority with power and commitment to ensure public interest been in place, such transport planning disaster would not have taken place, he said.

Prof Shamsul Hoque, another professor of civil engineering at Buet, who was a technical expert for the study on the BRT system, said, "... Irreparable damage has been done to the public transport system planned for the city. The BRT system, disjointed by flyovers, is not going to achieve its goal."

The BRT route from the airport to Jheelmil housing project in Keraniganj was essential for serving the people's transport need in the city heart and commercial areas along its route, Prof Hoque said.

While the complete BRT system would be the best solution, the system in part with termination in Mohakhali is going to be counter-productive, he said.

A large number of travellers would get off at Mohakhali and they would need to take other means of transport to travel further.

Prof Hoque said according to the STP, the Mouchak flyover was supposed to extend up to Moghbazar in a way that it would accommodate the BRT corridor. But the flyover was extended arbitrarily time and again blocking the dedicated passage for the buses.

The LGED, the implementing authority of Mouchak flyover, did not sync the flyover's design with four major mass transportation routes of metro rail and the BRT.

The government had formed a six-member technical committee, led by

the professor, which recommended dedicated lanes on the Moghbazar-Mouchak flyover for BRT. But the LGED ignored the recommendations, said Prof Hoque.

The construction of the flyover began in 2013 and it was opened in 2017.

The STP had suggested that the BRT route be along the Airport Road via Banani, Mohakhali, Tejgaon, Moghbazar and Kakrail. At Kakrail, one part of it would go towards Rajarbagh, DIT Extension Road, Bangabhaban, Kaptanbazar, Baldha Garden and Babu Bazar. Another part would go towards the Matshya Bhaban, Abdul Ghani Road, Golap Shah Mazar, North South Road.

The merger of the parts was supposed to be at Saidabad Transport Hub but the Kaptanbazar part had to be revised due to lack of coordination with Mayor Hanif flyover, he said.

Anisur Rahman, a traffic engineer of Dhaka Transport Coordination Authority (DTCA), who was the project director for the BRT feasibility study and its detailed design, said, "The airport-Keraniganj BRT system would have been in place by now had the flyovers not occupied half of the route's corridor."

The World Bank, which funded the feasibility study, was interested in the entire route and stations until 2016. Now with flyovers blocking the route, it is interested only in the airport to Mohakhali section.

The feasibility study began in 2012 and took four years to complete. The detailed design was done in June last year spending Tk 19 crore, Anisur said, adding that the DTCA had sought \$250 million loan from the World Bank for the entire airport-to-Sadarghat route but they were now going to place a revised loan proposal.

Anisur said they were waiting for \$6 million as project preparatory fund from the World Bank for the airport-Mohakhali part. This part includes, a 10km corridor, five stations, an 11-storey modern bus terminal with a depot that has a capacity to accommodate 100 BRT buses and 400 regular ones and a BRT overpass in Mohakhali.

The estimated cost for this part is \$597 million.

According to the findings of the STP of 2005, about 2.1 million trips are made every day in the capital. About 28 percent of them are on foot, another 28 percent on public buses, 39 percent on rickshaws and only 5 percent on cars.

As of last March, around 8,000 buses and 2,500 human hauliers serve the city of over 14.4 million people.

Tragic death

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Yasin Hossain, 7, was a second grader at a local school, and Eamin, also 7, a first grader at another school.

Eamin jumped into the river when he saw his cousin, who was bathing, being swept away by heavy current.

Both remained traceless until their bodies were recovered by locals two hours later, police and locals said.

Man fleeing

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the nineteenth arrondissement of Paris for "unauthorized entry into a site protected by the National Gendarmerie and driving without a driving license."

The man told the police that he did not know that he had broken into the DGSE headquarters.

Located on Boulevard Mortier in northeastern Paris, the ultra-secure site was featured in acclaimed French TV spy thriller "Le Bureau des Legendes", which won international acclaim under the English title "The Bureau."

Yaba pills worth Tk 10 crore seized

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) seized 3.40 lakh pieces of yaba tablets at Teknaf upazila in Cox's Bazar yesterday morning.

BGB recovered the yaba tablets from Nazir Para Rahman Project area under Teknaf Sadar union at around 4:00am when those were being smuggled.

Teknaf-2 BGB commander Lt Col Md Asaduzzaman Chowdhury said, acting on a tip off that a large consignment of yaba tablets may enter Bangladesh area from Myanmar through Rahman Project area, a patrol team of BGB took up position in the area.

The patrol team saw 10 to 12 people carrying a sack and out of suspicion approached them. The smugglers dropped the sack and fled the area.

The sack was recovered and brought to the BGB camp where it was opened and the nearly 3.40 lakh pieces of yaba tablets worth about Tk 10.20 crore was found in it.

The BGB commander also said, the seized yaba tablets have been kept at the battalion headquarters which will be destroyed later in presence of high officials, civil administration, representatives of the Narcotics Control Directorate and the media.

Tougher quota

FROM PAGE 16

BCL men have attacked quota reformists at least 18 times in the last three months, injuring around 75 students of four universities, according to media reports.

Some of the injured were allegedly driven out of hospitals and secretly took treatment in different health complexes after they were denied treatment in some government hospitals.

Fearing further attack or arrest, the injured quota reformists could not return to their campus, let alone stay in the dormitories.

They have also remained inactive on social media to evade arrest and further attacks.

At present, a total of seven students of different public universities involved with the quota reform movement are in jail. They are -- joint conveners of the platform Rashed Khan, Faruk Hosen, APM Suhel, Tarikul Islam, Moshir Rahman, Jashim Uddin and Ratul Sarker.

All of them were shown arrested under the four cases filed by the university authorities and the law enforcers over vandalising Dhaka University's vice-chancellor's residence, obstructing police, snatching walkie-talkies and for falling foul of the ICT act.

Around a hundred members of the platform, which spearheaded the movement for civil quota system reform, joined yesterday's rally, in which some guardians of the arrested quota reformists also took part.

In April, students of public and private universities across the country took to the streets demanding reform in the quota system. The protesters blocked key points in the capital and roads and highways elsewhere.

At present, 56 per cent of government jobs are reserved for candidates from various quotas, while the remaining 44 per cent draw applications from the merit list.

Of the 56 per cent, 30 per cent are kept for freedom fighters' children and grandchildren, 10 per cent for women, 10 per cent for people of districts lagging behind, five percent for members of indigenous communities, and one percent for physically-challenged people.