



The body of Mohiuddin Sohel, 35, a former Bangladesh Chhatra League leader, is being carried in a police pickup yesterday after a mob beat him to death over alleged extortion. The incident took place at Pahartali Railway Bazar in Chattogram city yesterday morning.

PHOTO: RAJIB RATHAN

## Of a polls

FROM PAGE 16

During a press conference at the Jatiya Press Club the next day, Abed, also EMF executive director, claimed that the election was peaceful and was “far better than the previous one”.

Addressing the event, a group of foreign polls observers, invited by the SHRF and the EMF, also termed the election free, fair and peaceful.

Asked, Abed told this newspaper yesterday that Obaidul, being an advisor to the organisation, did not violate the EC guidelines.

The SHRF has one or two more politicians as advisers and those are “ornamental” posts, he said. “Their political views are not served here”.

The SHRF executive committee is headed by a retired judge, who is the president of the policymaking body, he added.

The EC guidelines for election observers said an organisation would not be registered as polls observer if it has an individual, directly involved with a registered political party or a polls aspirant, as its chief executive or a member of its board of directors or management committee.

Contacted, Obaidul claimed he was involved with the SHRF till 2015 and has no connection with the organisation now.

“I am not involved with it [SHRF] since 2016. They used my name when it was founded... I was involved with it nominally,” he told this paper over the phone.

He claimed he did not attend any of its meetings nor give them any advice.

During a visit to the SHRF office in Mirpur-12 recently, a correspondent of The Daily Star found that it was housed in an apartment building.

The journalist was not allowed in. The website of the organisation -- (<https://sarchumanrights.org>) -- was also down.

Asked, Abed said, “We’re working to fix it. It [the website] will be available soon.”

At the December 31 press conference, the foreign observers from Canada, India, Nepal and Sri Lanka also said the just-concluded election was “much better” than past elections in Bangladesh and could be a “glowing example for other democratic countries”.

They had visited some polling centres in the capital.

“This was a world standard election... We can compare this with the elections of major democratic countries,” said former president of Kolkata Press Club, Komol Bhattacharya.

Another observer from Nepal, Advocate Mohamadin Ali, said Bangladesh has set the best example of a high standard election.

Former minister and member of Nepal Communist Party, Hakikullah Musalman, said he was immensely impressed to see such a “peaceful, disciplined and orderly” election in Bangladesh.

The EC had approved 25,920 local observers from 81 organisations to monitor the election.

## China executes kindergarten knife attacker

AFP, Beijing

China has executed a farmer who attacked several children with a knife at a kindergarten in a southern Chinese city two years ago, state media reported yesterday.

Yan Peng'an was executed last Friday for slashing young children at the school in the Guangxi Zhuang region, the official Xinhua news agency reported.

Yan went to the kindergarten with a kitchen knife in January 2017 and attacked 12 children, seriously injuring four of them.

A teacher fended off the attack and called for help as Yan fled the scene. He later surrendered himself to local authorities.

## Mob beats 'extortionist'

FROM PAGE 1

Chandpur, police sources said. His father was a former sub-assistant engineer of the Bangladesh Railway east zone.

During the incident, agitated traders of the market, the second largest wholesale market in the port city, torched what they claimed was Sohel's “torture cell”. They also protested by keeping their shops closed for two hours, demanding an end to extortion.

Sohel was a former general secretary of BCL Chittagong Government Commerce College unit and was also a member of the BCL's central committee, Hasan Murad Biplob, a former vice president of the college's student union, told this correspondent. He added that Sohel had later gotten detached from political activities.

AKM Mohiuddin Selim, officer-in-charge (OC) of Double Mooring Police Station, said the incident took place around 10:00am. A chase and counter chase took place between the traders of the market and Sohel's followers.

He also said that police rescued Sohel and one of his aides around 11:00am. Sohel was taken to Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH) where he succumbed to his injuries, the OC said, adding that the traders claimed the incident was a protest against extortion.

A murder case would be lodged in this connection, the OC said.

Two other people, including local trader Osman Khan, who is also the joint secretary of the Chattogram unit Jatiya Party, were injured during the incident. They were also being treated at CMCH, Jahir Hossain, inspector (investigation) of Double Mooring Police Station, said.

According to witnesses and traders, Sohel had been extorting money from the traders and also the market-bound trucks with the help of several of his aides for the past year and a half.

He had allegedly grabbed several railway quarters in the adjoining area of the market and built an office there called MN-IP Foundation. Traders also

alleged that Sohel used to take people into his “office” and torture them.

They added that several of Sohel's aides around 9:00am picked up a vegetable vendor and took him to the office.

On information, some traders, led by Osman, went to the office at 9:30am to rescue the vendor.

As soon as they arrived, Sohel's aides attacked them with sharp weapons injuring Osman. A chase and counter chase then took place, said Nur Nabi Talukder, former joint secretary of Pahartali Railway Bazar Traders' Welfare Association.

After the attack, Osman immediately went to the traders' association office and made an announcement on loudspeakers informing people about the incident.

Infuriated traders then took to the street and surrounded the office. Agitated locals, who were also agitated by Sohel's unruly activities for long, joined the traders.

The angry mob entered the office and set it ablaze from the inside, said Arif Khan, a trader, adding that the people took Sohel and one of his aides out of the office and beat them up.

Former leaders of the traders' association, after a meeting with police officials, announced that they would open the shops at 12:30pm after a two hour-long shut-down.

Speaking to The Daily Star the traders said they were angry as their association's convener, also local ward councillor, Saber Ahmed did not appear at the scene.

Contacted, Saber said there was previous enmity between Sohel and Osman. He, however, admitted that Sohel had been engaged in extortion in the area and that Saber himself had filed complaints to the local administration several times in this regard.

Shamsul Alam Chowdhury, a former joint secretary of the association, said that the traders had become enraged as Sohel's extortion and other unruly activities had increased over the last six months.

## Bangladesh 2nd

FROM PAGE 1

With the United States at the top of the table, China, Japan, Germany and India take the lead as the top five economies.

The report which forecasts the fortunes of 193 countries to 2033 says China is likely to overtake the US as the world's number one economy in 2032, two years later than previously expected, due to a more lax monetary policy and lower exchange rate.

In the long run, many Asian economies will rise through the ranks of the table as these countries cash in on their demographic dividends.

The two most prominent examples are Bangladesh, which will enter the top 25 largest economies in 24th place in 2033, and Pakistan, which will rise to 27th in 2033, said the report.

“We expect annual rates of GDP growth [in Bangladesh] to average 7 percent between 2018 and 2033. This will see the country climb 19 places in the World Economic League Table to become the world's 24th largest economy by 2033,” said the report, which was released on December 26.

Bangladesh will rank 36th in 2023 and 27th in 2028.

According to the report, Bangladesh has benefitted from garments exports, strong increase in remittances, duty free access to the Indian market, domestic consumption expenditure and government spending.

Bangladesh's economy is expected to have grown by 7.3 percent in 2018, just shy of the 7.4 percent in the previous year. The country has benefitted from a strong increase in remittances in the financial year ending 2018, after declines in the previous two years. Moreover, the export sector benefitted from the duty free access to the Indian market, pushing exports to \$375 mil-

lion in the three months to September.

Indian clothing retailers, as well as global retailers opening Indian outlets, increasingly import from Bangladesh due to the competitive prices of their products.

“Bangladesh's competitiveness relative to India was further boosted by the introduction of a general sales tax in India, a step that is still outstanding in Bangladesh,” said the 10th edition of the CEBR report.

It, however, warned the country runs the risk of negating gains from its successful export sector through its growing appetite for imports. The current account tipped into a deficit in 2017, and this is expected to widen in 2018, it added.

“The government will also need to explore options on how to increase revenues in order to finance upgrades for infrastructure while maintaining the social safety net.”

The country is further grappling with the Rohingya refugee crisis, the report added.

The CEBR predicts that three of the top five global economies by 2033 will be Asian, with China at the top, India third and Japan fourth position. The US will be second and Germany fifth.

In a statement, CEBR Deputy Chairman Douglas McWilliams said: “The World Economic League Table shows that despite global uncertainty and the tightening in US monetary policy which has pushed down some of the emerging market currencies, the 21st century is still likely to be the Asian century.”

The table gives a ranking of the world's developed and emerging economies by gross domestic product measured in US dollars at market prices to 2033.

## One killed

FROM PAGE 16

footpath in Mirpur-10 area, said the witness who is acquainted with the injured.

Police said there were injury marks on Roman's body which was sent to Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College morgue for an autopsy.

Syed Mamun Mostafa, assistant commissioner (Mirpur zone) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, said they were investigating the incident and trying to arrest the attackers.

Mainul Hossain Khan Nikhil, president of Dhaka city (North) Jubo League, told this newspaper that none of those involved in the clash held any post of the organisation.

“All of them are criminals. I talked with the OC of the local police station and asked him to take action against them,” he added.

About taking control of footpaths in Mirpur by Jubo League men, Mainul said he didn't know about any such incident.

## Einstein

FROM PAGE 16

attracted condemnation and ridicule.

The distinguished gathering of Indian researchers and scientists hosts Nobel laureates, but in recent years has seen Hindu mythology and faith-based theories edging onto the agenda.

At this year's congress, the head of a southern Indian university cited an ancient Hindu text as proof that stem cell research was discovered on the subcontinent thousands of years ago.

“We had 100 Kauravas from one mother because of stem cell and test tube technology,” said G. Nageshwar Rao, Vice Chancellor at Andhra University, referring to a story from the Hindu epic Mahabharata.

Rao, who was addressing school children and scientists at the event, also said a demon king from another centuries-old Hindu epic had two dozen aircraft and a network of landing strips in modern-day Sri Lanka.

“Hindu Lord Vishnu used guided missiles known as ‘Vishnu Chakra’ and chased moving targets,” added the professor of inorganic chemistry.

Event organisers tried to hose down the remarks, saying it was “unfortunate” the prestigious event had been derailed by controversy.

“We don't subscribe to their views and distance ourselves from their comments. This is unfortunate,” Premendu P. Mathur, general secretary of Indian Scientific Congress Association, told AFP.

“There is a serious concern about such kind of utterances by responsible people.”

Another scientist from a university in Tamil Nadu told the attendees that Isaac Newton and Albert Einstein were both wrong and that gravitational waves should be renamed “Narendra Modi Waves”.

Dr KJ Krishnan reportedly said Newton failed to “understand gravitational repulsive forces” and Einstein's theories were “misleading”.

## Schoolgirl

FROM PAGE 16

a class-II student at Gabtala Government Primary School, used to go to their neighbour Nirmal Sarker's house every afternoon. Nirmal's daughter Ambika Sarker, a college student, was Sushmita's tutor.

As Ambika was not at home on Sunday evening, her brother Joyprakash Sarker began to teach Sushmita.

Prashanto alleged that no one was at the house at that time and Joyprakash raped his daughter.

At one stage, Sushmita lost consciousness. Thinking that she died, Joyprakash dumped the body in a pond, he quoted Joyprakash as saying.

Later, villagers not finding her anywhere decided to search in the pond. Hearing this, Joyprakash took the body from the pond and dumped it in the septic tank, he said.

A case was filed with Ashashuni Police Station yesterday.

Biplob Kumar, OC of the police station, said Joyprakash admitted that he was involved in the crime.

## British citizen

FROM PAGE 16

“After finding no one named Jalal at the hospital, we went to the rehab centre and found nobody on its premises.

“After searching the whole building, we finally discovered the body inside an ambulance,” the grieving woman said.

Jalal's uncle Emadul Haque said the family would sue the rehab authorities.

Mohammad Shahjalal, superintendent of police in Moulvibazar, said the body was sent to Moulvibazar Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Polash Kumar Roy, resident medical officer of the hospital, said, “I found a large number of injury marks on the body.”

This correspondent found the rehab centre deserted yesterday afternoon.

The victim's cousin Shahinur Abedin said Jalal had been living with his uncle's family in the UK since childhood.

Last April, his uncle sent him back to Bangladesh due to his drug addiction, he added.

He was admitted to the rehabilitation centre last month, he added.

### LANDSLIDE AT ILLEGAL STONE QUARRY

## Two workers killed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Two workers were killed in a landslide at an illegal stone quarry in Shah Arefin Tila area in Bholaganj of Sylhet's Companiganj upazila yesterday afternoon.

The dead were identified as Sona Miah, 25, and Nurul Haque, 30, from Dakshin Sunamganj upazila in Sunamganj.

Tajul Islam, officer-in-charge of Companiganj Police Station, said the bodies were buried under a huge pile of earth and would be recovered this morning.

Meanwhile, illegal stone quarry workers yesterday attacked a taskforce during a special drive in the upazila and injured 15 men, including BCB

men, and railway and upazila administration staffers.

The taskforce was formed with the inclusion of the administration, BCB and police to stop illegal stone extraction from Companiganj and Gowainghat upazilas.

Bijen Banerjee, upazila nirbahi officer of Companiganj, said, “The taskforce started a drive in the upazila in the afternoon. Within hours, some miscreants, influenced by illegal stone traders, launched an attack on the members of the taskforce.

“In the attack, 15 men were injured. Two of them are in critical condition. We are trying to find the identity of the attackers and a case will be filed soon,” he said.

## Myanmar asks army to crush Rakhine rebels

REUTERS, Yangon

Myanmar government leader Aung San Suu Kyi yesterday discussed insurgent attacks on Myanmar police in a rare meeting with the military chief, and her administration called for the armed forces to “crush” the rebels, a government spokesman said.

Fighting between government forces and the rebel Arakan Army in the western state of Rakhine has displaced thousands of people since early December, according to the United Nations.

The Arakan Army wants greater autonomy for Rakhine, where the mainly Buddhist Rakhine ethnic group makes up the majority of the population.

Rakhine State saw a military-led crackdown in 2017, following attacks by Rohingya Muslim insurgents that prompted hundreds of thousands of Rohingya to flee westwards into neighbouring Bangladesh.

Myanmar government spokesman Zaw Htay said Suu Kyi, President Win Myint and other cabinet members met military leaders, including army chief Min Aung Hlaing, his deputy and the military intelligence chief, to discuss

## RMG workers

FROM PAGE 16

According to industry sources, entry-level workers represent only around 10 percent of the industry workforce.

But the disparity and reluctance to follow the structure weren't the only reasons for the protests.

Mohammad Rafique, an operator of a garment factory, said the workers took to the street as their management did not give them a written assurance of following the new wage structure.

“Although the factory management has been verbally assuring us of paying the salary under the new wage structure, they have not given it in writing. This is why we cannot trust them,” said Rafique.

Contacted over phone, Siddiqur Rahman, president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association, said, “We are getting ready to pay the workers under the new wage structure that the wage board recommended and the government approved for the sector.

“We are also suggesting the factory-owners to make the workers understand the salary structure as written in the gazette so that no vested quarter can instigate them to agitate.”

Meanwhile in yesterday's incident, some 3,000 garment workers of nearby Uttarkhan, Azampur and Abdullahpur areas started gathering on the road at around 9:30am and blocked the road

till 2:15pm.

Navid Kamal Shoibal, deputy commissioner (Uttara Division) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, said workers withdrew the sit-in programme after factory owners came to the spot and spoke to them.

Police also broke a demonstration of garment workers over the new wage structure in Savar and Gazipur yesterday.

During the agitation, the workers chanted slogans demanding hike of their wage in all grades and burnt a passenger bus near the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport.

Commuters heading towards Mymensingh, Netrakona, Sherpur, Gazipur, Manikganj, Tangail, Kishoreganj and Jamalpur districts faced tailbacks, along with those who were heading for the airport, which is near to where the protests took place.

“When we could see the situation was worsening we left our car at Bishwa Road crossing and started walking as we have to reach the airport by 1:00pm,” said Moniruzzaman and Monsur Ali Khan, two Qatar bound passengers.

Similarly, Md Topu went to the airport on foot from Banani to collect his luggage that was lost a week ago, he said.

Like them, thousands of passengers suffered for hours due to the blockade as vehicular movement was stopped by the agitated workers.

## Riyadh moves

FROM PAGE 16

“We issue outpass [travel pass] to those whose Bangladeshi citizenship could be verified. So, there is no question of Saudi Arabia deporting Rohingya,” he told The Daily Star over phone yesterday evening.

The MEE, however, says one of the videos sent to it shows a Rohingya detainee sitting down, filming secretly, as dozens of Rohingyas are lined up to be processed for removal in Shumaisi.

Some Rohingyas were also put in handcuffs after they attempted to resist their deportation to Bangladesh, according to voice notes sent to the MEE.

The man in the video, who is speaking Rohingya, said, “I've been here for the last five to six years; now they are sending me to Bangladesh. Please pray for me.”

Another recording sent to the MEE recounted the events that led up to Sunday's forcible removal of the Rohingyas.

“They came to our cells in the middle of the night at 12:00pm, telling us to pack our bags and get ready for Bangladesh,” said a Rohingya detainee, who wished to remain anonymous.

“Now I am in handcuffs and being taken to a country I'm not from - I am a Rohingya, not Bangladeshi.”

Nay San Lwin, a Rohingya activist, condemned the Saudi deportations.

“If these Rohingya detainees are released in Saudi Arabia, they can support their families held in refugee camps in Bangladesh, instead of accepting their deportation to Bangladesh,” Lwin told MEE.

“They are not criminals to be held in handcuffs, and I am very sad to see them being treated like criminals by the Saudi authorities.

“I appeal to the Saudi government, as a Rohingya, not to deport anyone and release them as soon as possible.”

Commenting on what will happen to the deported Rohingyas, Lwin said, “Now they will be sent to refugee camps and will increase the number of refugees in Bangladesh.”

In October last year, Middle East Eye reported that Rohingya detainees were being prepared for deportation just days after Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina visited Saudi Arabia.

Documents leaked to MEE confirmed testimony from detainees that forms from the Saudi interior ministry demanded a confirmation on the refugees' “full mental health” before their deportation to Bangladesh.

Detainees said Rohingyas were “punched” in the chest by Saudi immigration police and forced to sign the documents.

Some Rohingyas had also come on passports from other South Asian countries, including Bhutan, India, Pakistan and Nepal.

The Rohingyas have been denied citizenship in Myanmar since 1982. Deprived of basic rights and persecuted in Myanmar, they escaped to Bangladesh following various waves of violence since the 1980s. Since August 2017, over 750,000 Rohingyas fled brutal military campaign in Rakhine to Bangladesh.