

US Capitol police officer who died after riot to lie in honor

AFP, Washington

The US Capitol police officer who died after being injured in the January 6 attack by pro-Trump rioters will lie in honor at the building's Rotunda, lawmakers said Friday, a mark of respect rarely bestowed.

Brian Sicknick was reportedly struck in the head with a fire extinguisher while struggling with the rioters who swarmed through the halls of Congress.

The 42-year-old member of the force that protects the ground of the Congress returned to his division office where he collapsed and was taken to the hospital, according to the Capitol Police.

He died the next day, they said, bringing the death toll from the violent attack to five.

"The U.S. Congress is united in grief, gratitude and solemn appreciation for the service and sacrifice of Officer Brian Sicknick," said Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer in a statement Friday.

Sicknick's actions "during the violent insurrection against our Capitol helped save lives, defend the temple of our democracy and ensure that the Congress was not diverted from our duty to the Constitution."

"On behalf of the House of Representatives and the Senate, it is our great privilege to pay tribute to Officer Sicknick with this lying-in-honor ceremony," the statement continued.

Only four other people have laid in honor in the Rotunda previously, according to the House archives website: The Reverend Billy Graham, civil rights icon Rosa Parks, and two other Capitol police officers, Jacob Chestnut and John Gibson, killed during a shooting rampage at the building in 1998.

Pelosi had earlier ordered flags over the Capitol lowered in Sicknick's honor. Four days after the attack, hundreds of off-duty police lined Constitution Avenue in Washington and saluted as a hearse rolled slowly by carrying his body.

Car bomb kills 5

FROM PAGE 16

Turkey routinely blames Kurdish fighters it accuses of being "terrorists" linked to its outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

In early January, another explosives-rigged vehicle killed one civilian in the town of Jindires in the Afrin region. The same day, a car bomb near a vegetable market in the Turkish-held border town of Ras al-Ain killed five people including two children.

In November, a car bomb went off near a bakery in Afrin, killing three people and wounding 16 others.

Syria's war has killed more than 387,000 people and displaced millions since starting in 2011 with the brutal repression of anti-government protests.

It has evolved into a complex conflict involving jihadists and foreign powers including Turkey, which has grabbed swathes of Syrian territory along its southern border during several military campaigns.

Lowest daily

FROM PAGE 16

have been tested, including 12,084 in the same 24-hour period.

Bangladesh reported its first novel coronavirus cases on March 8 last year and the first death on March 18.

On Friday, the country recorded 454 Covid-19 cases and only seven fatalities.

Indian farmers

FROM PAGE 16

"The farmers' movement was peaceful and will be peaceful," said Darshan Pal, a leader of the Samyukt Kisan Morcha group of farm unions organising the protests. "The events on January 30 will be organised to spread the values of truth and non-violence."

Agriculture employs about half of India's population of 1.3 billion, and unrest among an estimated 150 million landowning farmers is one of the biggest challenges to the government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi since coming to power in 2014.

Eleven rounds of talks between farm unions and the government have failed to break the deadlock. The government has offered to put the laws on hold for 18 months, but farmers say they will not end their protests for anything less than full repeal.

In the past week, a planned tractor parade on Tuesday's Republic Day anniversary turned violent when some protesters deviated from pre-agreed routes, tore down barricades and clashed with police, who used tear gas to try and restrain them.

Sporadic clashes between protesters, police and groups protesting anti-farmer slogans have broken out on multiple occasions since then.



Farmers raise their hands as they arrive in a tractor trolley at a site of a protest against the farm laws at Singhu border near New Delhi, India yesterday.

'Bomb police station, frame lawyer'

FROM PAGE 16

reply, the OC said, "Saifullah went to BELA and filed a case against the brick kiln.

"Bad boy, Sir," the OC was heard saying.

Then the MP said, "You bomb the police station at night now. After that you will have to file a case on his name. Can you? When you are here, you have to do these things... What I am saying is the last word... I am a member of the standing committee on forests and environment. There is no one to show power. So why does he [Saifullah] go again and again, what do you do?"

Then the OC said, "He [Saifullah] repeatedly brought the papers of the High Court, Sir."

Then the MP said, "Hey, what is the High Court? Whatever the Court is,

don't we have our own game?"

The MP is then heard giving the OC an option to bomb a brick kiln.

"If needed, send policemen in plainclothes to any brick kiln and detonate a bomb there saying that the attack was done for robbery. It was that person..."

The OC said, "There is a clear instruction from the High Court to stop the Super Bricks, Sir."

The MP then said, "I will not close any brick kilns in my area except school-college in our area. Whoever gives the direction, I will not..."

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday evening, Keshabpur OC Jashim Uddin said, "I can't recall the specific conversation. I talk to the MP for different reasons at different times. I can't remember everything."

Asked whether he had listened to

the audio clip. He replied, "Yes."

This correspondent wanted to know whether it was their conversation. The OC said, "Why are you asking me the same over and over again? I gave my statement."

Keshabpur MP Shaheen did not pick up calls or respond to texts.

Talking to the other media outlets, he claimed the audio clip was tampered with.

Saifullah said that he filed a writ petition in the High Court seeking the brick kiln's eviction.

"The MP got angry. I saw the news about the instructions given to the OC. Later I made a general diary (GD) with the police station. Right now I am in fear. The OC told me to be careful and not go anywhere alone."

BELA Executive Director Syeda Rizwana Hasan told The Daily Star,

"It is a brick kiln that does not have a licence and does not have the DoE clearance.

"Those who suffer are the owners of date orchards. Jashore's date orchards are famous... Unlicensed brick kilns are running in such areas. As a lawmaker, without taking a stand against it, he takes a stand against those who are speaking on behalf of the victims. It is not acceptable... The conversation he had to frame the victims cannot be made in the civilized world.

"It is these MPs who insult such a prestigious position. There should be an investigation into this incident. We do not need such a Member of Parliament. What law will he make? How can the rule of law be established in the country by keeping such MPs in parliament?" she said.

Virus relief tax takes effect in Argentina

FROM PAGE 16

Starting Friday, the national tax authority is authorized to start calculating and claiming the amounts due.

Under the law, those who are taxable will pay up to 3.5 percent on assets declared within the country, and up to 5.25 percent on assets held abroad.

The proceeds will be used to buy medical supplies, aid small and medium enterprises, fund social aid,

and to provide natural gas to people off the energy grid.

The measure has been criticized by Argentina's center-right opposition, which has described it as "confiscatory."

And the Argentine Rural Society, which represents the interests of large farmers in a country whose income depends heavily on grain and cattle production, has expressed fear the measure would become permanent.

Argentina has been badly hit by the coronavirus, with more than 1.9 million confirmed cases of infection and more than 47,000 deaths.

The pandemic has exacerbated the already high poverty rate in a country which has been in recession since 2018, and has an unemployment rate of 11.7 percent.

In its annual report on economic inequality, Oxfam said Monday the world's 1,000 richest people had recouped their coronavirus-related

losses within nine months, while it could take the world's poorest more than a decade to recover from the impacts of the global health crisis.

"The world's 10 richest men have seen their combined wealth increase by half a trillion dollars since the pandemic began -- more than enough to pay for a Covid-19 vaccine for everyone and to ensure no one is pushed into poverty by the pandemic," it said.

Don't repeat 'bad history'

FROM PAGE 16

WHO has repeated that the only way to beat the pandemic and revive the global economy is to ensure that priority groups in every country are vaccinated.

Tedros urged the world avoid repeating past mistakes, pointing to the HIV/AIDS crisis, where wealthy countries acquired life-saving medicines nearly a decade before they became affordable in poorer countries.

He also pointed to the H1N1 flu pandemic in 2009, when vaccines only reached poorer nations after the outbreak was over.

"I don't think that is a good history. It is bad history," he said.

EU BACKS OFF

British-Swedish firm AstraZeneca said it can only deliver a fraction of its vaccine doses promised to the EU and Britain because of production problems, but both sides are demanding their pledges are met.

The EU threatened to restrict

vaccine exports to Northern Ireland by overriding part of the Brexit deal with Britain that allowed the free flow of goods over the Irish border, but backed down after British Prime Minister Boris Johnson voiced "grave concerns".

The European Commission will "ensure that the Ireland/Northern Ireland Protocol is unaffected", the EU commissioner said in a statement late Friday.

That came after the EU released a redacted version of its contract with AstraZeneca, while announcing a mechanism that could allow it to deny the export of vaccines made on European soil.

The AstraZeneca vaccine on Friday became the third to get EU approval after Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna, but it came under the shadow of the bitter diplomatic row.

AUSTRALIAN OPEN BOOST

With vaccine rollouts still in their early stages, movement restrictions remain among the few options for

governments to try to stop the spread of Covid-19.

Surges have overwhelmed healthcare systems even in rich countries such as Britain and the United States, while Mozambique President Filipe Nyusi warned that hospitals across southern Africa were "rapidly reaching the limit of their capacities".

Citing concerns over the new strains, Germany on Friday said it would ban travel from countries where the variants are prevalent, starting this weekend, while Canada announced hotel quarantine for all new arrivals.

France has announced the closure of its borders to all non-EU travellers except for essential travel.

WUHAN VIRUS PROBE

A team of WHO experts investigating the origins of the coronavirus toured a propaganda exhibition celebrating China's recovery from the pandemic in Wuhan yesterday, after a meeting at the hospital that treated the first confirmed Covid-19 cases over a year ago.

Details of the trip have been scant so far, with the media kept at arm's length and information on the itinerary dribbling out via tweets from the World Health Organization experts instead of China's tight-lipped Communist authorities.

The group was driven to the Jinyintan Hospital, the first to receive officially diagnosed Covid-19 patients in late 2019, as the horrors of the virus emerged in the central Chinese city.

In a tweet, team member Peter Daszak welcomed the hospital visit as an "important opportunity to talk directly w/ medics who were on the ground at that critical time fighting COVID."

Yesterday afternoon, the team visited a cavernous exhibition that applauds the emergency response of Wuhan health authorities in the chaotic, terrifying early stages of the outbreak -- as well as the agility of the Communist leadership in controlling a crisis without precedent.

Life getting better in Bhasan Char

FROM PAGE 1

feeling a drive within herself to become solvent.

"At least I've got something to do now. I will be able to make my own dresses and earn in the future by doing it for others," she told this correspondent at the island, around 40km off Noakhali, a couple of days ago.

Like Khaleda, Noor Jahan is also learning tailoring and sewing.

"In the last four days I have learned how to cut blouse pieces. I'm also learning sewing. It's exciting. I want to learn how to make other dresses too," she said.

Khaleda, Jahan and other Rohingya women, who have recently been relocated to the island from the refugee camp in Cox's Bazar, are taking tailoring and sewing lessons from two lady trainers.

Trainer Ruhani Taskin said the

Rohingya women have great interest in their work and that they were quick learners.

These activities are part of a project taken up by the Bangladesh government to train Rohingya men and women on the island on various activities, like sewing, poultry rearing, cattle rearing and vegetables farming.

Bangladesh Rural Development Board has been providing various training to the Rohingyas to ensure their livelihood.

Officials said all the adult males and females who have the capability to work would be given training in phases.

"Currently, we are providing training to five batches. Each batch has 50 people and they will be trained for five days," Shankar Kumar Paul, project director of BRDB, told The Daily Star.

He said an assessment would be done after the basic training to find out which profession suited a trainee. Then extensive training will be provided to them.

Ijjat Ullah, a Rohingya man, was learning how to cultivate land and grow vegetables in a scientific way.

"There is huge land. If we get land, we can cultivate our own vegetables and can sell them too," Ijjat Ullah said adding that he would like to take training on fishing too.

He said there were 120 ponds and two big lakes at Bhasan Char and those can be used for fishing.

The BRDB started the training activities on January 27.

A total of 39 NGOs are working at the island. Some are giving poultry assistance while some farming training.

AA Mamun Chowdhury, project director of Ashrayan Project-3,

official name of the Bhasan Char project, said a coordinated effort was needed among the NGOs so that the work could be done smoothly.

"The government and various NGOs are working to ensure the Rohingyas' livelihood. The more organized the work is, the more beneficial it will be for the Rohingyas," he added.

Yesterday, the third batch of Rohingyas -- 1,466 -- reached Bhasan Char, while 1,776 had arrived on Friday.

The people with luggage, chickens, ducks, goats, solar panels, food and other belongings had left in ships from Chattogram around 9:00am. They were given breakfast and lunch on the way.

Four ships carrying the third batch of Rohingyas arrived at Bhasan Char around noon.

Modi may visit

FROM PAGE 16

Sheikh Hasina is likely to take place on March 27, according to the sources.

The previous in-person interaction between the two leaders had taken place when Hasina was in New Delhi in October 2019 and virtually in December last year.

The officials of the two countries are trying to ensure some "deliverables" during the Indian PM's coming visit to Dhaka in several sectors covering the development partnership and remove some of the major irritants in bilateral ties including the Teesta water-sharing deal.

Detailed discussions on the wide-ranging areas of ongoing cooperation between the two countries as well as the preparations for the visit of Modi to Dhaka in March in connection with the celebration of Mujib Borsho and commemoration of the 50th anniversary of Bangladesh's Independence.

Bangladesh-India diplomatic relations had taken place at yesterday's Foreign Office Consultations co-chaired by Foreign Secretaries Masud bin Momen of Bangladesh and Harsh Vardhan Shringla of India in New Delhi.

They also discussed the joint celebration of the anniversaries in select capitals of the world.

Rail staff held

FROM PAGE 16

According to Alamgir Hossain, officer-in-charge of Srimangal Railway Police Station, the victim was travelling by Dhaka-bound local train Surma Mail on Friday night.

While crossing Lawachhara forest between Bhanugachh and Srimangal railway stations, Zahid forcibly took her to a dark compartment and raped her, he said, quoting the case statement.

When the train reached Srimangal station, the victim got down on the platform and started shouting. Zahid tried to flee but passengers caught him and handed him over to police.

Elections

FROM PAGE 16

In the district's Madhupur municipality, the BNP's mayor candidate boycotted the election over alleged irregularities.

In Harinakundu municipality of Jhenidah, a man was injured in a clash between supporters of AL's mayoral nominee Faruk Hossain and party rebel candidate Saiful Islam Tipu at a polling centre in Mandartola-Jora Pukuria area.

Police fired blank shots to bring the situation under control. Voting was suspended at the centre for about half an hour due to the violence.

In Feni municipality, two councillors hopefuls in ward-14 -- BNP-backed Noor Islam and independent candidate Tajul Islam Pavel -- came under attack alleged from activists of Jubo League and Chhatra League near the Rampur-Sayedee Poura School polling centre around 9:00am.

Several crude bombs exploded near the school and some other polling, creating panic among voters.

BNP mayor candidate Alaluddin alleged that AL men intimidated voters, drove his polling agents out of voting centres and also tried to capture many polling centres.

In Shibganj municipality of Bogura, BNP mayor candidate Motiar Rahman Motin boycotted the election alleging that ruling party men occupied polling centres and stamped ballots after driving his agents out of voting stations.

In Dhunat municipality of the district, a mobile court fined two AL activists Tk 5,000 each for illegally entering the Char Dhunat Primary School polling centre and beating up a polling agent of an independent mayor candidate around 11:00am.

In Munshiganj, Ansar members barred two journalists from entering Munshiganj High School polling centre, saying that they needed "special permission".

Mexico leader hopeful worst of his Covid illness over

AFP, Mexico City

Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador said Friday he was hopeful that he was through the worst of his coronavirus infection as he reappeared in a video message to the nation.

"I still have Covid but the doctors already tell me that the critical phase is passing," said the 67-year-old from the National Palace, where he has his office and official residence.

"Now I present myself to you so that there are no rumors," he added in the video posted on social media.

"I'm fine although I still have to rest," he said in a steady voice.

Dressed in a suit, tie and overcoat -- but without a face mask -- he is seen walking and talking for around 13 minutes through the National Palace.

Lopez Obrador said he was working while in isolation, in particular on efforts to secure more vaccines for Mexico, which has one of the world's highest Covid-19 death tolls at more than 156,000.