

Expelled BNP leaders too campaigning for Cumilla rally

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cumilla

Some BNP leaders and activists, who were earlier expelled from the party, have been campaigning for the November 26 rally in Cumilla.

They were campaigning "for the sake of the party's interest", said the party insiders.

Monirul Haque Sakku, former mayor of Cumilla City Corporation, was expelled from the party in May for competing in the city election after defying the party's decision.

Sakku, also a former joint secretary of Cumilla (south) district BNP, was seen campaigning for the last couple of days in the city.

He and his followers conducted campaigns in Nurpur, Katabil, Hazratpara, Barpara, Housing Estate and Balutoba areas yesterday.

"We are determined to make our rally successful for the sake of our party. I will continue doing politics till my death. I hope the party high-ups will withdraw my expulsion order," he told The Daily Star.

Nizam Uddin Kaiser, former president of the Cumilla city Swechhashebak Dal, a front organisation of the BNP, was also expelled from the party in May. He too joined the campaign.

Besides, several other BNP leaders who were also expelled for contesting in polls, have become active again and are conducting campaigns for the rally.

Meanwhile, Kaiser and around a dozen expelled BNP men held a press conference yesterday demanding the withdrawal of their expulsion orders.

Kaiser also alleged police were raiding the houses of different BNP men with an aim to foil the November 26 rally.

BNP men were also seen campaigning and distributing leaflets in different adjoining districts, including Laxmipur, Brahmanbaria, Noakhali, Chandpur and Feni.

"We hope that several lakh people will join our November 26 rally," said Amin-ur-Rashid Yasin, convener of the Cumilla (south) district BNP.

The BNP has been holding rallies in the divisional cities protesting the price hike of essentials and fuel.

Recent rallies were held in Chattogram, Mymensingh, Khulna, Rangpur, Barisal, Faridpur and Sylhet.

The rest of the rallies are scheduled for November 26, December 3 and 10 in Cumilla, Rajshahi and Dhaka.



Thick black smoke billowing out of an under-construction building near Wasa intersection in Chattogram city yesterday afternoon. Firefighters said the blaze might have been caused by a burning cigarette. No injuries were reported. PHOTO: COLLECTED

'You're playing with fire!'

IAEA chief warns as Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant shelled; Kyiv, Moscow trade blame

AGENCIES

Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, which is under Russian control, was rocked by shelling yesterday, drawing condemnation from the UN nuclear watchdog which said such attacks risked a major nuclear disaster.

More than a dozen blasts shook Europe's biggest nuclear power plant on Saturday evening and yesterday, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) said. Moscow and Kyiv both blamed the other for the shelling of the facility.

"The news from our team yesterday and this morning is extremely disturbing," said Rafael Grossi, head of the IAEA, whose team on the ground said there had been damage to some buildings, systems and equipment at the plant.

"Explosions occurred at the site of this major nuclear power plant, which is completely unacceptable. Whoever is behind this, it must stop immediately. As I have said many times before, you're playing with fire!"

Repeated shelling of the plant in southern Ukraine, which Russia took control of shortly after its February

invasion, has raised concern about the potential for a grave accident just 500 km (300 miles) from the site of the world's worst nuclear accident, the 1986 Chernobyl disaster.

The Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant provided about a fifth of Ukraine's electricity before Russia's February 24 invasion, and has been forced to operate on back-up generators a number of times. It has six Soviet-designed VVER-1000 V-320 water-cooled and water-moderated reactors containing Uranium 235.

The reactors are shut down but there is a risk that nuclear fuel could overheat if the power that drives the cooling systems was cut. Shelling has repeatedly cut power lines.

Both Kyiv and Moscow have accused each other of attacking the plant on several occasions during the conflict and risking a nuclear accident, and they again exchanged blame yesterday.

Russia's defence ministry said Ukraine fired shells at power lines supplying the plant, while TASS reported some of the site's storage facilities had been hit by Ukrainian shelling, quoting an official from Russian nuclear power operator Rosenergoatom, reports Reuters.

Lavrov calls off Dhaka visit

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has cancelled his planned visit to Dhaka and said he will talk to Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen over the phone today or tomorrow.

Lavrov was supposed to be in Bangladesh from November 23 to 24 to attend a minister-level meeting of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA).

He was scheduled to call on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen.

"I can understand it. They are very busy. Their activities due to the war have increased to a large extent. Maybe for that reason, he is unable to come," Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen told a few reporters after an event of the IORA at the InterContinental Hotel.

The Russian side conveyed the message to the foreign ministry that Lavrov would be unable to come.

"He [Lavrov] wants to speak with me over the phone. And I agreed," Momen said.

Instead of Lavrov, Aleksandr Mantytsky, the Russian Ambassador to Bangladesh, will represent his country in the IORA meeting.

The visit would have been the first by any Russian foreign minister to Bangladesh and was considered

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Child calls police, stops her marriage

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

A 13-year-old girl called police and stopped her marriage in Faridpur's Saltha upazila yesterday.

Achia Akhter, daughter of Atiq Matubbar of Dargagatti village of the upazila's Gotti union, called the officer in charge of the local police station as her family members arranged the marriage against her will, reports our local correspondent.

Police rushed to the spot and halted the marriage scheduled for today, said Md Sheikh Sadiq, OC of Saltha Police Station.

They also made Achia's father sign a bond saying he would not marry his daughter off until she was at least 18 years of age, according to the law.

Parents of Achia, a ninth grader of Joyjhap High School in the upazila, had arranged her marriage as the family was facing financial troubles.

OC Sadiq told reporters that he will bear all of Achia's education expenses to help the family.

"When I will be transferred from this police station, I will tell the next OC to continue [supporting Achia]."

Achia said she did not want to get married as she is determined to continue her studies.

Jubo League activist hacked to death

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Criminals hacked a Jubo League activist to death inside a restaurant in Chattogram's Sitakunda upazila yesterday evening.

The victim was Yousuf Khan, 35, of Nunachara Battalion area of the upazila.

Tofayel Ahmed, officer-in-charge of Sitakunda Model Police Station, said three youths entered Mridula Hotel and Restaurant in Sitakunda municipality around 6:45pm and hacked Yousuf indiscriminately. He died on the spot.

The body was sent to Chattogram Medical College morgue for an autopsy, said the OC, adding that the motive behind the killing could not be known immediately.

Citing locals, police said Yousuf was a supplier of sand, brick and cement.

BGB seizes gold bars worth Tk 8.35cr

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Some 80 gold bars, worth Tk 8.35 crore, have been recovered near the Indo-Bangla border in Jashore's Chaugachha upazila.

Members of Border Guard Bangladesh recovered the gold bars, weighing around 9.3kg, around 11:30pm on Saturday.

A patrol team first noticed movement of two men, suspected to be smugglers, on a cropland in the area.

As they chased the duo, they hurriedly buried the gold bars on the land and fled, said Lt Col Shahed Minhaj Siddiqui, commanding officer of the 49th BGB Battalion.

The BGB team then dug the soil and recovered the gold bars, he added.

A case was filed with Chaugachha Police Station in this connection.

Gone within moments

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on the other side of Johnson Road then rode away with the convicts named Moinul Hasan Shamim, who goes by aliases Samir and Imran, and Abu Siddiqi Sohail.

The account was given by Nur, now admitted to the National Institute of Ophthalmology, and several others present at the scene.

Nur's nose was broken and he could barely see anything when this correspondent visited him at the institute last night.

"It happened before I could understand what was going on," he said.

The fugitives, who are members of banned outfit Ansar Al Islam, were sentenced to death in February last year for killing publisher Faisal Arefin Dipan in 2015. Sohail was also sentenced to death in a case filed over the murder of blogger-writer Avijit Roy the same year.

Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan said a red alert was issued across the country to arrest the fugitives and border guards were asked to remain vigilant.

"If someone was negligent and if someone did this intentionally, we will take measures," he told reporters at the secretariat.

Police also announced a bounty of Tk 10 lakh for each fugitive.

Criminal law expert Ehsanul Haque Shomaji said the incident exposed a serious lack of security.

"Militants are dangerous. Additional security measures should have been in place. The daring escape exposed the inadequate security arrangement on the court premises," he told The Daily Star.

Entry to the court needs to be restricted, he said, adding that security cameras should cover every corner of the premises.

This is not the first time convicted militants escaped from custody. On February 23, 2014, a gang of 10-15 masked men opened fire and hurled crude bombs at a prison bus in

Trishal, Mymensingh, and snatched away three convicted militants, two of whom were sentenced to death.

A constable was killed in that incident.

Of the three fugitives, Rakib Hasan Russell was killed in a gunfight later and Zahidul Islam who went by the alias Boma Mizan was arrested in India.

Yesterday, 12 militants, including Shamim and Sohail, were taken to the court for hearing of a case filed with Mohammadpur Police Station in 2016 under the Anti-Terrorism Act.

Only three constables were guarding each four of the convicts under the supervision of an assistant sub-inspector.

After the end of the hearing on the seventh floor, the 12 militants were taken to the ground floor in groups of four.

According to the court sources, the convicts were not bound with fetters and police were taking them to the prison cell without the judge's permission.

Dhaka Metropolitan Public Prosecutor Abdullah Abu said the security measures were inadequate and the militants would not have been able to escape if they were properly bound.

Criminal law expert SM Shahjahan told The Daily Star that it was up to police to decide whether to put fetters on the accused while taking them to the court.

Dhaka Metropolitan Police formed a five-member committee headed by an additional commissioner to investigate whether there were any security lapses at the scene and report within three days, said a press release.

The committee was also asked to recommend measures to avert such incidents in the future, it added.

Meanwhile, the Supreme Court administration yesterday asked the police to strengthen the security at courts across the country.

BSF detains Bangladeshi man for trespassing

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Indian Border Security Force detained a Bangladeshi youth for trespassing into India around 10:00pm on Saturday.

The detainee is Robin Sarkar, 21, of Dantbhanga union in Kurigram's Rowmari upazila, said sources at Border Guard Bangladesh.

Robin intruded into India to bring cattle illegally, they said, adding that members of Kukurmara BSF camp in India detained him and took him to their camp.

BGB will take necessary actions in this connection if the unit is informed officially, said Subedar Khalekur Rahman, commander of Dantbhanga BGB camp.

Nine die after car plunges into dam in Nigeria

AFP, Kano

Nine people drowned and three others were rescued when their overloaded car plunged into a dam in northern Nigeria, the fire service said yesterday.

The accident occurred late on Saturday when the car's tyre burst, forcing it to veer off road and plunge into Fada Dam, 60 kilometres (37 miles) outside Kano, said Saminu Yusuf Abdullahi, Kano fire service spokesman.

"Nine bodies were recovered and conveyed to Gwarzo General Hospital where doctors confirmed them dead," he said in a statement.

He said three other passengers were rescued with the help of local fishermen.

He added that the passengers were heading to neighbouring Katsina state when the accident happened.

Valencia steers Ecuador past Qatar

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becoming only the second hosts, after South Africa in 2010, to be dumped out in the first round.

Hopes were high among the crowd that Qatar could make a winning start, but the deficiencies of the World Cup debutants were ruthlessly exposed by an impressive Ecuador.

Qatar failed to even muster a shot on target in the game, with spectators filing out of the stands long before the final whistle.

In the 92-year history of the tournament, home countries had previously won 16 and drawn six of

their opening matches.

The South Americans had the ball in the net inside three minutes when captain Valencia nodded home from Felix Torres' miscued overhead kick.

VAR officials spotted an offside against Michael Estrada in the build-up after Torres challenged for the ball with Qatar goalkeeper Saad Al Sheeb.

Ecuador were completely dominant in the early exchanges, though, and were awarded a penalty after Valencia was tripped by Al Sheeb when through on goal.

The former West Ham forward

coolly sent Al Sheeb the wrong way from the spot and stroked the ball into the bottom corner to score his 36th international goal.

Ecuador did not have to wait long to double their advantage as, after a surging run from Moises Caicedo, right-back Angelo Preciado swung in a cross which Valencia met with a thumping header.

Even the small section of noticeably enthusiastic Qatari fans situated behind the goal, who arrived together after the majority of the crowd and wore matching t-shirts, briefly fell silent.

And so, it begins

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occasion for the world to unite and celebrate, and do so without caveats.

Speaking of celebration, the one place where verve has not dimmed is our own homeland. The excitement in Bangladesh is at a fever pitch, and the Brazil and Argentina fans, in particular, have come out on their strongest foot.

I have often wondered why Bangladeshis get so passionate about

the World Cup to the point that it becomes a global story. I reckon it is because the tournament, and in particular the allegiance towards Brazil and Argentina, is one of the few cultural experiences that we strongly shared with our previous generations.

We share it with our peers, and will do so with our progeny. So, when we go crazy about the Seleccion and the Albiceleste, we are not just celebrating the teams but the memories we

created with our parents, and the potential ones with our children.

My father was my World Cup fever's initiator and, unfortunately, this is the first edition I will be watching without him. I offer my love and prayers to all the World Cup partners that we have lost, and I wish everyone gets to experience the unique thrill, which the showpiece tournament inevitably offers, with their beloved ones.

COP27 strikes deal on fund for poor nations

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other countries had said earlier that they were worried about efforts to block measures to strengthen last year's Glasgow Climate Pact.

"It is more than frustrating to see overdue steps on mitigation and the phase-out of fossil energies being stonewalled by a number of large emitters and oil producers," German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock said in a statement.

In line with earlier iterations, the approved deal did not contain a reference requested by India and some other delegations to phasing down use of "all fossil fuels".

It instead called on countries to take steps toward "the phasedown of unabated coal power and phase-out

of inefficient fossil fuel subsidies," as agreed at the COP26 Glasgow summit.

"What we have in front of us is not enough of a step forward for people and planet," a disappointed Frans Timmermans, executive vice president of the EU, told his fellow negotiators. "It does not bring enough added efforts from major emitters to increase and accelerate their emissions cuts."

The text also included a reference to "low-emissions energy", raising concern among some that it opened the door to the growing use of natural gas - a fossil fuel that leads to both carbon dioxide and methane emissions.

"It does not break with Glasgow

completely, but it doesn't raise ambition at all," Norway's Climate Minister Espen Barth Eide told reporters.

Small island nations facing a climate-driven rise in sea level had pushed for the loss and damage deal, but lamented the lack of ambition on curbing emissions.

"I recognise the progress we made in COP27" in terms of establishing the fund, the Maldives climate minister, Aminath Shauna, told the plenary. But "we have failed on mitigation ... We have to ensure that we increase ambition to peak emissions by 2025. We have to phase out fossil fuel."

The climate envoy from the Marshall Islands said she was "worn out" but happy with the fund's approval.