

FORCED DISAPPEARANCE

Haas meets the victims' families

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

US Ambassador to Bangladesh Peter Haas visited the home of a victim of enforced disappearance in Dhaka's Shaheenbagh area yesterday morning.

The families of some other victims were also there and they shared their ordeals with the ambassador.

Haas went to the house of BNP leader Sajedul Islam Sumon, who has been missing since 2013, around round 9:00am and left at 9:35am, said Sumon's sister Sanjida Islam.

The event was arranged by "Mayer Dak", a platform that organises programmes demanding the return of such victims. Sumon's mother is a key organiser of the platform.

A spokesperson for the US embassy said Haas had to leave the house early out of security concerns. "We have informed the matter to the higher authorities."

Some members of "Mayer Kanna" took position in and around the house before the ambassador's arrival. "They created a noisy situation and tried to talk to the ambassador when he was entering our home," said Sanjida.

Mayer Kanna is a platform of families of the victims of 1977 court martial during the regime of late president Ziaur Rahman. It has been demanding justice for the victims.

Later in the day, at a press briefing, Foreign Minister Abdul Momen said the US ambassador met him to inform him of a situation developing when the envoy went to Sumon's home.

Ambassador's security personnel advised him to leave as soon as possible, otherwise his vehicle could be blocked, the minister said.

"Out of security concerns, he left immediately and he is disappointed," the minister said.

Momen said, "I told him [Haas] that protecting him and his people is our responsibility. I asked him whether anyone had attacked him or his people. He said no, but his car seems to have been scratched but he was not sure about it."

The minister asked the ambassador to find out how the information of his

SEE PAGE 7 COL 1

RELATED STORY ON PAGE 3



There are nearly 100 illegal establishments along the walls of the Rayerbazar Martyred Intellectual Memorial in the capital. People occupying the space illegally say that they pay rent to local influential people to use the property.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

TCB to buy 2.75cr litres of edible oil from local suppliers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Trading Corporation of Bangladesh will purchase 2.75 crore litres of edible oil from local suppliers to continue its sale of essential items at subsidised rates to one crore low-income families across the country.

Yesterday, the cabinet committee on government purchase approved the TCB proposal.

TCB will purchase the edible oil at Tk 184-186 a litre but sell at Tk 110 a litre to the families.

Of the proposed amount, TCB will purchase about 1.1 crore litres from City Edible Oil for Tk 184.84 a litre, Sayeed Mahbub Khan, additional secretary of the cabinet division, told reporters after the cabinet committee's meeting.

The state organisation will also buy 1.1

crore litres from Super Oil Refinery and 55 lakh litres from Shun Shing Edible Oil for Tk 185.95 and Tk 184.5 a litre respectively, he added.

Yesterday, it started selling essentials for the month of December among around one crore beneficiary cardholders from low-income groups.

The organisation will sell sugar and pulse at an increased rate of Tk 60 and Tk 70 a kg respectively. The prices of both items have gone up by Tk 5 a kg. The price of edible oil remains unchanged from the previous month.

On Tuesday, TCB said the prices of sugar and pulse have increased due to a rise in prices of commodities in the local market.

It has been selling the goods at subsidised rates to the beneficiary

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

Japan considers resettling some Rohingyas

Says outgoing envoy

BSS, Dhaka

Japanese Ambassador in Dhaka Ito Naoki has said his country was considering resettlement of some Rohingyas to Japan as Bangladesh tries to ease its load of over a million of refugees who fled their homes in Myanmar to evade persecution.

"Japan has received the request about third country resettlement [of Rohingyas] from your [Bangladesh] government. UNHCR here is also advising us to consider the possibility [to take Rohingyas to Japan]," the outgoing envoy told BSS, ahead of leaving Dhaka ending his tenure.

Sirajganj students attacked for protesting irregularities

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Students of the Sirajganj's Betil Bohumukhi High School and College were attacked allegedly by men of the school authorities yesterday.

The attack took place after the students held a human chain protesting the institutions alleged corruption and harassment.

A group of outsiders, along with members of the school authority, suddenly launched an attack, leaving at least seven students injured.

Around three students were detained and were later released, sources said.

Meanwhile, many protesters alleged that law enforcers tried to restrain them.

Md Anisur Rahman, office-in-charge of Enayetpur Police Station, said police tried to bring the situation under control.

When this correspondent, Md Hafizur Rahman, called the headmaster of the school, he said, "I will talk to you later", and said he was busy in prayer.

Italy announces 3m Euro for Rohingya refugees

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Italy has announced EUR 3 million for the continued protection and humanitarian assistance for Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh.

The announcement was made yesterday by Enrico Nunziata, Italian ambassador to Bangladesh, while Johannes van der Klaauw, UNHCR representative in Bangladesh, welcomed it.

"The contribution from Italy will enable the UNHCR to provide protection services such as registration, access to justice, support for survivors of gender-based violence, community-based protection and child-friendly spaces," the UN Refugee Agency said in a statement yesterday.

It will also empower the refugee communities, through education, by training teachers to implement the Myanmar curriculum in the camps, and skills development for women, to improve their resilience until they can return to Myanmar.

Man held for killing father of "Argentina supporter"

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

A man was arrested on Tuesday night from his home in Habiganj's Nabiganj upazila over the killing of the father of "an Argentina supporter".

The arrestee, Shekul Mia, 30, is a supporter of Brazil and was hiding in his house ever since he was accused in the murder case, said Rakibul Islam Khan, OC of Bahubal Model Police Station.

On Saturday morning, Shahid Mia, 50, was killed in a clash between supporters of the two Latin footballing nations in Bahubal upazila.

1 journo killed

FROM PAGE 1

The Digital Security Act is often used to keep journalists and bloggers in prison, in appalling conditions, it read.

RSF Secretary General Christophe Deloire said, "Dictatorial and authoritarian regimes are filling their prisons faster than ever by jailing journalists."

"This new record in the number of detained journalists confirms the pressing and urgent need to resist these unscrupulous governments and to extend our active solidarity to all those who embody the ideal of journalistic freedom, independence and pluralism."

The 2022 round-up figures include professional journalists, non-professional journalists and media workers.

AL government

FROM PAGE 1

marking the Martyred Intellectuals Day.

Hasina said her government has repeatedly requested the USA and Canada governments to hand over the killers of Bangabandhu, but they did not pay heed to it.

"Rashed who killed four-year old Sukanto, three cousins, my uncle [husband of paternal aunt] and shot my paternal aunt after storming their house on August 15 in 1975, is now staying in the US. We have requested time and again to return the convicted killer to us," she said.

The premier also said killer Noor who was involved in the killing of the Father of the Nation, his wife, three sons and two daughters-in-laws, are now in Canada.

"They [America and Canada] are not returning the convicted accused Rashed and Maj (sacked) Noor as they are protecting the human rights of the killers," she said.

The prime minister indicated anxiety of some countries about the human rights violation of criminals, saying, "They are busy with ensuring human rights of any terrorist or militant or drug dealer who was killed. But there is no discussion [on the fact that] they [criminals] have violated human rights."

At the meeting, Road Transport and Bridges Minister and AL General Secretary Obaidul Quader gave the address of welcome.

At the outset of the programme, one minute silence was observed to show respect to the martyred intellectuals, freedom fighters and martyrs of the August 15 and November 3 in 1975 massacres and all the democratic and progressive movements.

They now say it's suicide

FROM PAGE 1

up saying he had an important call to receive and would call back. But he did not call back or answer his phone later.

Nooruddin had earlier told this paper, "Fardin saw ups and downs in the family and handled every situation head-on. He is a fighter. A boy like him can never do something like that."

The DB, which was tasked to investigate the case, said that after dropping his friend Amatullah Bushra off at Rampura on November 4 night, Fardin roamed aimlessly and did not meet anyone.

Nooruddin on December 2 told this newspaper: "Fardin might've been picked up and taken across the city at gunpoint. He might've been forced to follow the perpetrators' instructions... The investigators should show us the CCTV footage of all locations... The boy used to come home by 11:00pm. Why would he roam like that in dodgy locations?"

Both the DB and Rab, however, could not say how Fardin went from Rampura to Jinjira, Babubazar, Johnson Road, Gulistan and Jatrabari where he was seen around 2:00am in CCTV footage.

On November 7, the decomposing body of Fardin Noor Parash, a third-year student of civil engineering of Buet, was recovered from the Shitalakkhya in Narayanganj's Siddhirganj, three days after he went missing.

On December 3, the DB said they were trying to determine whether he had died by suicide.

WHAT DB SAID

The DB chief said, "He wandered around that night because he was going through psychological problems."

"Fardin was an introvert. He could not share everything with everyone. His results were gradually deteriorating. He had a CGPA of 3.15 in the first semester. Then his results started going down gradually and it stood at 2.67. None of his family or relatives knew about this."

He said Fardin needed Tk 60,000 to go to Spain for a debate competition, but he was struggling to gather the money. He received Tk 40,000 from his friends.

"Fardin used to impart private lessons. With this money, he used to pay for his as well as his two younger brothers' education. Still, he had to maintain discipline at his home like returning home early. He would not stay in the dorm. He was under some kind of pressure, which he could not accept."

The DB chief said Fardin went to Babubazar Bridge. As the bridge was busy from 10:53pm to 11:09pm, he probably backed out and went to the bridge in Demra instead.

"It appears that Fardin was last standing right in the middle of that bridge," he said citing the last location reported by his phone.

He also mentioned that Fardin did not know how to swim.

Police also have Fardin's with a of his in messenger and telegram apps, according to a written statement DB officials distributed at the briefing.

Fardin has expressed his frustration many times in those conversations. According to that friend, he was depressed.

Noting that no injury marks were found in Fardin's medical report, Harun said the viscera report was yet to be released.

The doctor who conducted the autopsy had previously said initial reports indicated head injuries but those injuries are minor and can only lead to one becoming unconscious. The doctor also told the media at that time that there were numerous injury marks on his head.

"If there were numerous injury marks, it would have come up in the police report," Harun argued.

WHAT RAB SAID

Khandaker Al Moin said that after roaming around Science Lab intersection, Nilkhet, Dhanmondi, Dhaka University campus from around 5:00pm, Fardin got down from a rickshaw around 10:00pm in Rampura Bridge area and roamed around there for some time.

Technical analysis shows that he later went to Jinjira in Keraniganj, adjacent to Babubazar Bridge, Johnson Road in Old Dhaka and the Underground Market area in Gulistan.

Analysing CCTV footage, it is known that at 2:01am Fardin was seen getting into a human hauler at

Bibirbagicha in Jatrabari.

Fardin got down from the vehicle at a bus stop on Tarabo Bishwa Road on the eastern end of Sultana Kamal Bridge around 02:20am, Moin said.

At 2:34am, he was almost in the middle of the Sultana Kamal Bridge. The distance from the Tarabo end of the bridge to the centre of the Sultana Kamal Bridge is approximately 400-500 meters, said Moin.

At 2:34.09am he crossed the railing of the bridge and at 2:34.16am he jumped off the bridge. At 2:35.09am, Fardin's mobile phone turned off.

At 2:51am, Fardin's watch stopped working, Moin said.

France end Morocco fairytale

FROM PAGE 1

When Saiss let a simple forward ball bounce over his head, Olivier Giroud broke away but his shot hit the post.

Then when Saiss came off Regragui abandoned his back three and matched France's 4-3-3.

Morocco finished the half strongly and nearly drew level when, following a corner, defender Jawad El Yamiqi saw his overhead kick tipped onto the post by Lloris.

The Atlas Lions then also lost Bayern Munich left-back Nussair Mazraoui at half-time, but France had not been saved from fitness worries themselves.

Two of their starters in the quarter-final win over England, Adrien Rabiot and Dayot Upamecano, were missing due to illness.

Les Bleus have been used to playing semi-finals on a knife-edge and their previous three wins at this stage — in 1998, 2006 and 2018 — had all come by a single goal.

Coach Didier Deschamps took off Giroud and replaced him with Marcus Thuram — son of Lilian — as Mbappe moved inside.

Kolo Muani then came on for Ousmane Dembele, and with 11 minutes remaining he scored from his first touch, tapping in after another Mbappe shot had been deflected.

The Moroccan players knew then it was game over, and so did French President Emmanuel Macron, standing to applaud in the crowd.

Mystical forces at play

FROM PAGE 1

in irrepressible form, contributing eight goals and assists in Qatar since that defeat while manager Lionel Scaloni, who appeared flabbergasted against the Saudi high-press, has made keen tactical choices ever since.

More crucial than either of those aspects, however, has been the impact of Lionel Messi's teammates such as Julian Alvarez, Rodrigo de Paul, et al. These players have changed the course of the tournament for Argentina, especially Alvarez and Enzo Fernandez, whose injection into the starting eleven breathed new life into team dynamics.

In 2006, Messi made his World Cup bow in a team that featured some of the brightest names in Argentina football: Pablo Aimar, Roberto Ayala, Walter Samuel, Juan Pablo Sorin, Hernan Crespo, Esteban Cambiasso, Javier Zanetti. It was a generation that had gone through heartbreak after heartbreak, defeated in the 2004 Copa America final, 2005 Confederations Cup final, a painful exit from that World Cup in Germany in 2006 before losing another Copa final in 2007. Some of these players are now coaches in the dugout, sharing their experiences and living their dream with the current generation.

That guidance is important, but more crucial is the fact that Messi's teammates appear willing to lay down their lives to give the legend the send-off he deserves with a World Cup trophy in hand. And why would they not be? Almost this entire team has grown up in the shadow of Messi's greatness.

De Paul, who has garnered the moniker of 'Messi's bodyguard', is 28 years old. As a 15-year-old, he watched Messi win his first Ballon d'Or. Julian Alvarez probably does not remember the 2006 World Cup as he was only six years old at the time. But he will remember, and is showing an eagerness, to right the wrongs of 2014, when a 14-year-old Alvarez watched Messi lose the World Cup final against Germany.

Goalkeeper Emi Martinez is 30 years old, yet he played no part in the 2014 World Cup. He only made his professional debut in 2012, by which time Messi had already claimed four Ballon d'Ors.

Given the intense passion with which Messi fans want to see him win, imagine those who have been his fans since childhood and are now sharing the stage with the star. Their desire to help him get to the dream must be unparalleled, especially considering

they are in a unique position to influence that legacy.

But Messi is giving just as much back to them, if not more. Unlike in past years, when Messi was surrounded by players of his own generation and looked more reserved, he has taken on the mantle of a vocal leader and has had to completely lead the team on and off the pitch. Of course, the shouting and 'passion' against the Netherlands showed that he was not shy about doing so.

But he has done the little things throughout every match, instructing and directing, unnoticed.

A few seconds before Messi completely bamboozled Josko Gvardiol for Argentina's third goal against Croatia, you could see him ushering Alvarez to block Gvardiol and create a space to make the run, instructions that were followed exactly. Against the Netherlands, Molina was hugging the touchline and Messi noticed that Nathan Ake would track Messi to midfield, leaving spaces in behind. So, he told Molina to make runs on the inside instead and it worked a treat. Little details like that, plus the ethereal skills he possesses, were on full display in the semifinal against Croatia.

There has also been a supernatural wave sweeping across Argentina, with local media's obsession with 'coincidencias maradoneanas' — links to 1986, no matter how tenuous, taken as signs that Argentina will take home the trophy for the first time since 1986.

Among these is a game of chance the squad participated in before the Copa America last summer. They were told if they could guess 10 cards correctly, they would win the World Cup. They did, with Messi correctly identifying the 'cinco de copas' (the five of diamonds). Within days of that, a photo emerged of Maradona on a journey with the national team, sitting at a table with the cinco de copas in front of him.

A video even surfaced of an old television appearance where Maradona was a surprise guest. Behind him, as he sat and talked, was a poster that had the date 'December 18' — the day of this year's final. Morocco's qualification for the last 16 — the first time they have done so since 1986 — also added to the sense that something supernatural is happening.

For now, all we know is that Argentina have made it to the final, looking to be in better shape than ever. All they need now is one more performance. Messi, his teammates, fans and even the mystical forces of the world, seem hell-bent on making that a most memorable one.