

Shop owner stabbed to death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Munshiganj

A man was stabbed to death by unidentified criminals in Sreenagar upazila of Munshiganj on Wednesday night, said police.

Satyaranjan Dutta, 64, owned an animal feed store, near the M Rahman shopping complex in the upazila.

Every evening, after closing his shop, he returned home around the same time. When he did not get home at his usual time on Wednesday night, his family started looking for him.

Satyaranjan was eventually found critically wounded next to the graveyard near his house in Jushurgaon area of Patabhog union around 9:30pm.

H was rescued and taken to the Sreenagar Upazila Health Complex, where the on-duty doctor declared him dead.

The victim's brother Adhir Dutta, also the general secretary of the Upazila Puja Celebration Committee, said, he was in Dhaka when he heard about the incident.

"By the time I reached the hospital, my brother was already dead!"

"I suspect criminals planned the attack on my brother. But, I don't understand why they would kill him. We don't have enmity with anyone. We did not even have any recent quarrels with anyone," he added.

Police said the victim's body bore multiple stab injuries.

Speaking to this newspaper, Aminul Islam, officer-in-charge (OC) of the Sreenagar Police Station, said, "An autopsy of the victim's body has been done. A case will soon be filed over the incident."

Contacted, Additional Superintendent of Police (Sreenagar Circle) Md Tofail Hossain Sarkar, said, "It appears as though the murder was a planned one. So far, we do not have a lead. But, we are investigating the incident from all angles."

"We will soon get a lead. We have some suspects. But no one has been arrested. A case has been drafted and will be registered soon."



Rescuers work at a site of a residential building destroyed by a Russian missile strike, amid Russia's attack on Ukraine, in Kramatorsk, Ukraine yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Russia keeps up pressure in eastern Ukraine

Three killed, 18 injured in missile strike on Donetsk apartments; Zelensky urges more sanctions against Moscow

REUTERS, Kyiv

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky yesterday urged EU leaders during talks in Kyiv to slap more sanctions on Russia, as Moscow's forces pressed their offensive in eastern Ukraine and fired missiles into the city of Kramatorsk near the front line.

One missile destroyed an apartment building late on Wednesday in Kramatorsk of Donetsk, killing at least three people and wounding 18, police said, while Russia said yesterday it had struck US-made rocket launchers in the area.

The head of the European Commission pledged more EU aid for Ukraine as she arrived in Kyiv by train along with more than a dozen other senior EU officials for two days of talks seen as key to Ukraine's hopes of one day joining the bloc.

"Russia is paying a heavy price (for

the war) as our sanctions are eroding its economy, throwing it back by a generation. We will keep turning up the pressure further," Ursula von der Leyen later told a joint news conference with Zelensky.

The West has imposed sweeping sanctions on Russia since its invasion of Ukraine on February 24 last year, aiming to cripple its ability to wage a war that has devastated Ukrainian cities and towns, killed tens of thousands of people and forced millions to flee their homes.

Zelensky called for more sanctions, saying the pace had "slightly slowed" of late and that Moscow was adapting to them.

"This is a joint European task to reduce Russia's ability to evade sanctions. And the faster and better this task is accomplished, the closer we will be to defeating the aggression of the Russian Federation," he

said.

Von der Leyen said the EU would have a new package of sanctions in place for the first anniversary of the war, the biggest armed conflict in Europe since World War Two.

But she avoided any commitment to fast-track Ukraine's EU membership bid, which is expected to take years.

Meanwhile, President Vladimir Putin said yesterday that Russia is being threatened by German tanks "again" as it was during World War II, warning that Moscow is ready to respond to aggression from the West.

Speaking at events marking the 80th anniversary of the Red Army's victory over Nazi Germany in Stalingrad, Putin drew parallels between the Soviet Union's fight in World War II and Moscow's intervention in Ukraine.

Public apathy

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The previous two ECs were criticised for holding "one-sided" polls in 2014 and 2018. In the former, 153 out of the 300 MPs were elected unopposed. In the latter, there were widespread allegations of ballot stuffing the night before the polls.

"Questions about the acceptability of 2014 and 2018 national elections and many other polls have gradually eroded most of the people's trust in the Election Commission. The latest poor turnout was a result of that lack of trust," said election expert Abdul Alim, who earlier worked on behalf of the United Nations with an EC.

The recent resignation of six BNP lawmakers from parliament made Wednesday's by-polls necessary.

Since the last general election, the current EC had held 30 by-polls. Thirteen of those were held amid coronavirus restrictions between March 17, 2020, and August 19, 2021.

Five by-polls were held before the restrictions were imposed and 12 after they were lifted.

No voting was needed in four by-elections because only one individual ran for MP in each.

Voter turnout on Wednesday was 16.10 percent in Brahmanbaria-2, 22.33 percent in Bogura-6, 23.92 percent in Bogura-4, 29.07 percent in Chapainawabganj-3, 34.78 percent in Chapainawabganj-2 and 46.30 percent in Thakurgaon-3.

The Awami League did not nominate anyone in Brahmanbaria-2, Bogura 4, and Thakurgaon 3. However, the AL's support for independent runner Abdus Sattar Bhuiyan in Brahmanbaria-2 was obvious. The ruling party officially supported candidates in two other constituencies.

The previous lowest turnout, 21.29 percent, was recorded in October 2019 during the Rangpur-3 by-polls.

Late Jatiya Party leader HM Ershad's son Rahgir Al Mahi Saad Ershad won that election in which no AL nominee participated.

"The voters lose interest when elections are not participatory and competitive," said Abdul Alim.

Contacted, Election Commissioner Rashida Sultana yesterday said turnout was good in Thakurgaon and Chapainawabganj and comparatively lower in Brahmanbaria and Bogura.

Bogura is known as a BNP stronghold, she said. Since the party was not a part of the by-polls, the BNP supporters did not come to the polling stations.

"The tenure of these MPs is only eight or nine months. That's why the voters didn't feel much interest in these by-elections," she said.

Govt seeks revision of deal

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reports UNB.

"In our view, the coal price they have quoted is excessive – it should be less than \$250 per metric tonne, which is what we are paying for the imported coal at our other thermal power plants," a PDB official told UNB.

The Adani power plant's coal price will be \$346 per metric tonne, which is much higher than the amount paid by the local coal-fired power plants, according to a report prepared by the Power Cell in January.

PDB pays \$245 per metric tonne for the coal used in the Payra power plant in Patuakhali, \$254.38 for the S Alam power plant in Chattogram's Banshkhali and the Rampal power plant in Bagerhat, and \$270 for the Barishal 307MW coal-fired power plant.

Save for Payra, all power plants are using coal that has the same 4600 calorific value, the report said.

"This is not an official analysis – you cannot compare one power plant with another," Mohammad Hossain, director general of Power Cell, told The Daily Star.

One power plant's evacuation cost is high, while another would have high land development costs.

"Since the Adani plant would be importing coal and a dedicated transmission line was built to transport the power, the price is slightly higher than the local coal-fired power plants,"

Hossain, however, declined to confirm whether PDB has sought to review the power purchase agreement with Adani Power.

The groundwork for the power purchase agreement was laid by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the 2015 state visit to Bangladesh, reports The Post.

Modi asked Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to "facilitate the entry of Indian companies in the power generation,

transmission and distribution sector of Bangladesh," according to an Indian foreign ministry readout of their meeting.

"After Modi's trip to Bangladesh, that country's power authority contracted with Adani to build a \$1.7 billion, 1,600-megawatt coal power plant," said the report published last month.

For Modi, it was an opportunity to bolster his "Neighbourhood First" foreign policy and promote Indian business, the report said.

But the Indian government now appears to be distancing itself from the deal.

Asked by an Indian journalist about the Bangladesh government seeking revision of the power purchase agreement, Arindam Bagchi, spokesman for the external affairs ministry, said: "I don't have anything on it. I understand you are referring to an agreement between a sovereign government and an Indian company. I am not aware of it. I don't even think we are involved in it."

Replying to a follow-up question by another Indian journalist on Adani Power vis-à-vis the Bangladesh issue, Bagchi said that as part of its larger "Neighbourhood First" strategy, India would like to see greater economic integration and inter-connection with its neighbours, "which assists our process of development".

India wanted its neighbouring countries to benefit from its economic growth through the strengthening of connectivity links and cooperation in the power and waterways sectors, reports our New Delhi correspondent.

"However, if some project is not working for financial or economic reasons, I don't think it is a reflection on the relationship and we will continue our efforts how to bring our two countries closer through greater investment and trade linkages."

his family members.

"We will quiz him to know what really happened – where did he go and why," he told The Daily Star.

Asif left home on January 27 evening and did not return.

On January 31, his wife filed a written complaint with the chief election commissioner through email demanding them to find her husband. She later filed a general diary with Ashuganj Police Station.

The Brahmanbari-2 by-election was held on Wednesday without presence of Abu Asif Ahmed.

His rival candidate, Abdus Sattar Bhuiyan won as an independent.

Tk 1.79cr not enough

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This is just a tip of the iceberg.

Gazipur City Corporation's internal enquiry found bigger anomalies in different development projects taken up under the annual development fund/revenue.

The GCC documents also show that in many cases, either full or 80 percent of bills were paid, but progress rate of the work was zero.

Interestingly, in some cases, the bills were settled even before the work order was issued. Besides, the documents show that contractors submitted invoices on the same date the contracts were signed.

According to the findings, tenders were awarded singularly by the mayor in a show of nepotism, flouting the recommendations of the evaluation committees, and the mayor's favourites got the deal instead of the lowest bidders.

Even devotees'

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days under tiny tents. The government spends a hefty amount to ensure all the arrangements are in place.

Accordingly, Gazipur City Corporation spent Tk 9.4 crore for the Bishwa Jitema for 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 fiscal years.

Of the amount, Tk 1.34 crore was set aside for repairing tube wells at the venue. And around Tk 24.33 lakh was earmarked for the food supplied by Abul Kashem Gong, a leasing company that got the tender.

GCC made the payment, but the food never came, according to the corporation's enquiry documents. It also did not find any voucher in support of the money being spent for food.

What is more surprising is that the tube wells that were repaired were not installed at the Bishwa Jitema ground. They were instead placed in different areas under the city corporation's project.

Tk 2.60cr

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The money that was deposited into the account was collected as advance holding taxes and building plan penalties from four companies – Ispahani Foods Limited, Fin Bangla Apparels Ltd, Honeywell Garments Ltd and GMS Composite Knitting Ind Ltd – in five pay orders amounting to Tk 2.60 crore.

The pay orders were supposed to be deposited into the city corporation's account instead of the mayor's personal account.

The money that was later withdrawn by the mayor's caretakers Polo Chakma and Shahidul never made it to the city corporation's fund.

The GCC documents state that the mayor personally embezzled the entire amount.

14kg gold seized at Dhaka airport

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Customs officials yesterday seized 120 gold bars worth around Tk 13.5 crore at the capital's Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport.

Following a tip-off, a team of customs officials raided a bus that was transporting passengers from an aircraft to the terminal area and found the gold bars, weighing around 14 kgs, taped behind a passenger seat, said Syed Mukaddes, deputy commissioner (preventive) of Customs House.

"We have detained the driver Harunur Rashid. We suspect he is involved in a smuggling ring."

A case is being filed in this regard, he added.

3 arrested for stealing copper wire from Rampal power plant

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bagerhat

Ansar and VDP members early yesterday detained three men in Bagerhat and recovered nine kgs of copper wire from their possession near the Rampal Thermal Power Plant.

Mamun Akon, 23, Billal Sheikh, 20, and Imran Sheikh, 21, were apprehended near the main entrance of the plant, said Chandan Debnath, commander of 3 Ansar Battalion.

The detainees and the recovered goods were handed over to the Rampal Police Station. A case was also filed with the station.

Over the last 10 months, different teams of the battalion detained 38 smugglers and recovered goods worth around Tk 58 lakh in 52 raids conducted at the power plant, the commander added.

Body of a man recovered from his house

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chapainawabganj

Police yesterday recovered the dead body of a man from his house in Chapainawabganj municipal area.

Golam Morshed Milon, 40, of Shiala- Gabtala Moholla, was found dead in his house around 9:30am. His throat was slit, said Alamgir Jahan, officer-in-charge of Sadar Model Police Station.

"During primary investigation, we found that the victim had a property-related dispute with his elder brother Elias Hossain, a lawyer."

One of their uncles had visited them the night before to mediate between the two. Elias disagreed with their suggestions. He killed Milon later in the night and fled the house, the OC said quoting family members.

The body was sent for an autopsy while police are trying to find and arrest Elias.

Govt commits to 20 IMF conditions

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As per the lender's balance of payments and investment position manual (BPM6), gross foreign reserves calculation does not include the various funds that the Bangladesh Bank has formed from the reserves as well as the loan guarantees provided for Biman, the currency swap with Sri Lanka, the loan to Payra Port Authority and the below-investment-grade securities.

The fund and the associated reforms are expected to stabilise the public debt at 42 percent of GDP.

Bangladesh has also committed to 13 structural benchmarks (SBs) – which are reform measures that often are non-quantifiable but are critical for achieving programme goals and are intended as markers to assess programme implementation – for this year.

The SBs include tax revenue measures yielding an additional 0.5 percent of GDP in the fiscal 2023-24 budget and the National Board of Revenue staffs Compliance Risk Management Units in the customs and VAT wings by December for higher revenue mobilisation.

By December, the finance ministry must develop a plan to reduce net savings certificate issuance to below 14 of total net domestic financing by fiscal 2025-26 and the government must adopt a periodic formula-based price adjustment mechanism for petroleum products.

The Bangladesh Bank must adopt an interest rate corridor system by July. By June, it must also compile and report official reserve assets as

per the BPM6 definition and use the market-determined exchange rate for official foreign exchange transactions on behalf of the government.

The Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics must publish quarterly GDP by December.

The central bank has to complete the pilot risk-based supervision action plan by June and also publish banks' distressed assets in the annual financial stability report.

By September, the finance ministry must submit to the Parliament the Bank Companies (Amendment) Act 2020 and the Finance Companies Act 2020, drafted in line with best practices.

The government must also adopt a sustainable public procurement policy paper and an associated action plan to integrate climate and green dimensions by September.

"We believe that our commitments are adequate to achieve program objectives, but we are prepared to take additional measures, as appropriate, for this purpose," said Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal and BB Governor Abdur Rouf Talukder in the letter of intent to IMF.

Should the government meet its June targets, the IMF will release the second tranche of the loan in November.

The lender has already dispatched the first tranche of \$476.27 million yesterday, which took the country's foreign exchange reserves to \$32.69 billion, said BB Spokesman Md Mezbaul Haque.

while the rest Tk 13,111.11 crore will be drawn from the government's fund.

Some 800,000 passengers will be able to travel through the MRT Line-1 every day. Passengers will take only 25 minutes to travel from Airport to Kamalapur with breaks at 12 underground stations and 21 minutes from Natun Bazar to Purbachal with breaks at seven stations.

Besides, passengers will be able to reach Purbachal from Kamalapur with an interchange in Natun Bazar station within only 40 minutes with breaks at 16 stations.

A total of six metro rail routes will be inaugurated in the capital city of Dhaka by 2030.