

SAGAR-RUNI MURDER Rab gets 101st date to submit probe report

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday extended till August 7 the deadline for submitting the probe report of a case filed over the murders of journalist couple Sagar Sarowar and Meherun Runi in February 2012.

This is the 101st extension of the deadline.

Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Md Shafuddin passed the order after Rab official Khondoker Shafiqul Alam, the investigation officer of the case and also an additional superintendent of police, failed to submit the report, court sources said.

On May 22 this year, the same court asked Rab to submit the report by yesterday.

Earlier, two separate courts expressed dissatisfaction over the probe and the investigators' failure to unearth the motive behind the killings and arrest the real culprits.

Sagar, news editor at private TV channel Maasranga, and his wife Runi, senior reporter at ATN Bangla, were killed in the early hours of February 11, 2012, in their rented flat in the capital's West Razabazar.

Their only son Mahir Sarowar Megh, then 5, was home at that time. Nousher Ali Roman, brother of Runi, filed a case with Sher-e-Bangla Police Station the following day.

BOTCHED C-SECTION Central Hospital sends legal notice to Sangjukta

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Central Hospital authorities yesterday sent a legal notice to gynaecologist Sangjukta Saha, seeking withdrawal of her statement blaming the hospital for the deaths of Mahbuba Rahman Akhi and her newborn.

"She falsely blamed the hospital while talking to the media on Tuesday. We have asked her to withdraw her statement in seven days. Otherwise, we will lodge a case against her under the Digital Security Act (DSA)," said Mohammad Mazharul Islam Sohel, a Supreme Court lawyer representing the hospital.

Akhi was admitted to the hospital with labour pains in the wee hours of June 10. Her newborn died hours after an alleged botched C-section. She died eight days later.

Sangjukta has claimed that she was not aware of the admission of Akhi and was not present at the hospital. She said she will hold a press conference at 11:00am today at her residence.

On June 14, Akhi's husband Yakub filed a case with Dhanmondi Police Station, accusing the doctors concerned and the hospital of botched C-section and fraud.

While there are countless super shops in the city, none address the need of the urban poor. Most industrial workers too have always been set aside from mainstream market services. This is where Apon Bazaar comes into the picture. It is an impact business or a social enterprise dedicated to improving the lives of industrial workers, especially in the RMG sector, and their families.



PHOTO: COLLECTED



APON BAZAAR

Serving needs of industrial workers

RBR

Apon is a gateway for accessing a range of different well-being products and services through an inclusive business model that ensures financial inclusion, economic well-being, and better health. As a retail business with specific focus on blue collar workers, Apon Bazaar is having a direct impact on their finance, health, and grocery service sectors.

Saif Rashid, founder and MD of Apon Bazaar, explains their business strategy.

"We are an omnichannel marketplace of affordable products and services for industrial workers. Apon operates shops inside factories, selling food and other disposables to workers at slightly discounted prices. In partnership with consumer goods manufacturing companies, the grocery and household wares cost the workers up to 10 percent less than at retail outside the factory. Workers also can buy their grocery at credit which is adjusted with their salary next month. Both physical store and Apon app gives a seamless, convenient and modern shopping experience to the workers.

"For each purchase from the shop, a worker earns reward points that accumulate in their Apon account. For every 100 Bangladeshi takas spent, the worker earns 1 Apon point. With

200 points, the worker gains access to zero-cash health coverage and insurance from Green Delta Insurance Company for up to Tk 30,000 allowing them to get free medical diagnoses, prescriptions from a doctor, hospitalization, and life insurance

investors. There is a distinct difference between businesses that do business 'for impact' and 'with impact'.

"Business 'with impact' is a business whose main focus is of profit and impact will happen as a by-product, while businesses 'for impact' are solely done with the purpose of solving certain problem and profit comes as its by-product," says Rashid.

Impact focus business is also profitable with substantial social impact. Their main focus is not profit-making. The profit comes naturally to such business, defining a clear mindset of doing impact business.

"We sell at lower prices but our volume of sales is bigger allowing us to make a profit. Our impact is on their socio-economic well-

being. They avail credit with no interest through buying groceries in credit and saving the difference between MRP and us, so far, we have provided more than USD 15 million worth of credit to the workers and they generated more than USD 600K savings," Rashid adds.

A person who is working a full-time job and for more than an eight-hour shift, should not stay below the poverty level, but these urban poor, who are mostly industrial workers in Dhaka, have always been set aside from mainstream market service. Apon is here to make a difference, and they have done just that!



coverage."

Apon is operating for four years and till date it has served 1 lakh RMG workers at 27 factories in Dhaka. They are retailers but unlike other retail stores, they do not have to pay rental or utility bills for the space. It is given by the garment factory. This helps Apon reduce its operating cost and thus the price of products in these stores is less than the usual maximum retail price (MRP) at regular stores.

"We are not an NGO. We do impactful business with commercial viability with the support of impact

Conspiracies afoot to dislodge govt

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Hasina intervened and told Nasim that it was he who lobbied to get Shajahan into AL.

In her introductory speech, Hasina said the AL does not need to rig polls to win since people trusts the party, reports UNB.

"The Awami League gets the votes of the people through its work for the masses and by gaining their confidence and trust," she said.

She said that whenever her party lost, it was due to conspiracies. "Vote robbers deprived the Awami League of its actual votes or seats, or tried to defeat the Awami League," she said.

Intel agencies

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Fakhrul alleged that BNP men are being arrested, jailed, and implicated in false cases all over the country.

Fakhrul said when the entire world is talking about the lack of democracy in Bangladesh and raising the allegation of human rights violations against the current regime, the prime minister and her party colleagues are again spreading lies.

"All kinds of evil tactics are being adopted to suppress political opponents. The vital and prominent members of the BNP and its associate bodies are being arrested across the country. The government is now doing what it did before the 2018 election," he alleged.

The BNP leader also accused the government of trying to use the administration once again for holding a lopsided election to stay in power. "But people won't let you do it this time."

Fakhrul called upon officials of the state machinery, including administration and law enforcement agencies, not to be involved in unconstitutional activities.

He urged the government to step down and hand over power to a non-party neutral administration for holding the next polls.

Is AL drifting away from core ideals?

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the country, but questions arise as to how many of its leaders and activists are loyal to its core ideals and how many of them will respond to the party's call when it is facing a crisis.

The life of the party's biggest leader, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, under whose leadership the AL rose to prominence, was full of sacrifices. So were the lives of numerous AL leaders and activists who came before and after Bangabandhu.

The question remains: will the party's countless activists rise to the occasion like their predecessors did?

With the 12th national election approaching, the party president Sheikh Hasina and general secretary Obaidul Quader have repeatedly warned that the forthcoming election will be a challenge for the party and that a united Awami League is the need of the hour.

At a time when organisational strength is required to face the opposition parties that have launched nationwide anti-government movements, the AL is facing internal feuds that have pitted its factions against each other at the grassroots level.

Issues that dominate the media discourse regarding the AL and its associated bodies include rogue behaviour, grassroots leaders' tussle over party positions and nominations, and infiltration within the party by BNP-Jamaat activists.

On June 23, 1949, East Pakistan Awami Muslim League was founded by the likes of Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani, Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy, Shamsul Haque and Ataur Rahman Khan. As Muslim League was becoming more authoritarian in its practice, these leaders broke away from the party. In a move to make it more pluralistic and non-communal, "Muslim" was removed from its name in 1955 and Awami Muslim League became Awami League.

The party faced a crisis following

ideological clashes between Suhrawardy and Bhashani in the late 1950s. In the early 1960s, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, already popular among students, emerged as a promising leader. In February 1966, he placed the six-point plan of regional autonomy for Pakistan's provinces. Since then, he'd steered the party towards unprecedented popularity. Even when he, along with fellow leaders, was incarcerated for being an accused in the Agartala Conspiracy case, the AL led the historic 1969 mass movement. After his release, Sheikh Mujib's party massively won the 1970 election and subsequently led the Liberation War in 1971 through which Bangladesh emerged as an independent country in the world map.

After the brutal killing of Bangabandhu and most of his family members, the party faced its darkest time.

Overcoming many political hurdles, since 1981, Bangabandhu's daughter Sheikh Hasina has been helming the party as its longest serving chief for 42 years now. Under her leadership, the party has come to power four times so far. Also, she is regarded the most successful leader of the party.

However, the AL, which has always considered itself as an activist-oriented party, were seen shifting its dependency towards bureaucracy and law enforcement agencies on many occasions.

Further, businessmen have become increasingly influential in the party ranks.

According to Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) statistics, 15 percent of the MPs were from the business community in the parliament of 1973, which jumped to 61 percent in the current parliament, pushing the number of active politicians down only to five percent.

In 2016, the AL adopted a plan to draw a distinction between the party and the government, but it never materialised. Rather, the line between the party and the government has

almost blurred over the years.

The AL top leadership's priority to run the government has drifted the party away from its core political and cultural activities, which, to a large extent, explain the organisational weakening of the party.

The AL's organisational activities have been confined to programmes marking special days, ministers' press conferences, issuing statements on current issues and rhetorical speeches for the government's development stories.

On the other hand, in recent months its political activities have been limited only to countering street agitations organised by the opposition parties.

Once a pioneer of democratic and non-communal values in the country's politics, it deviated from its values when it struck deals with religious parties and made important decisions at the insistence of Islamist parties.

The party struck a deal with Khelafat Majlis in 2006 where the AL pledged that it would allow alems (experts on Islamic laws) to issue fatwa (religious decree) if the AL-led alliance was voted to power. The Islamist group Hefazat-e-Islam's increasing influence on AL's policy-making is another case in point. Following demands made by Hefazat, the statue of the Lady Justice was removed from the Supreme Court premises and contents written by Hindu and freethinking writers were removed from school textbooks. Very recently, the party also allowed Jamaat-e-Islami to hold a rally in Dhaka.

This is not the AL that the people once adored as the voice of their own. This is not the AL that was once considered as the last bastion of secularism.

As the AL celebrates its 74th anniversary, we can only hope that the party with a history of uniting the country against communalism and inequalities will live up to our expectations of a democratic and secular Bangladesh.

EXTORTION OF CATTLE-LADEN TRUCK Jubo League leader, 4 others arrested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police yesterday arrested a Jubo League leader and four of his associates for allegedly beating up cattle traders and snatching away Tk 5,000 from them in the capital's Shukrabad area early.

After obstructing the cattle-laden truck, which was heading to Chattogram from Naogaon, they also tried to take their cattle to a specific market, alleged the truck driver Zulfikar, who filed a case at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Police Station over the incident.

The arrestees are Kazi Maruf Hossain Biplob, convener of Mohammadpur unit Jubo League, his associates Dewan Aralaf, Mohammad Tanvir, Johirul Islam and Md Rafi, Upal Barua, officer-in-charge of the police station, told The Daily Star.

The five were sent to jail by a court, he added. According to the case statement, some cow traders left for Chattogram's Boyalkhali market with 18 cows from Naogaon. When their truck came to Shukrabad area around 3:20am, 11-12 men intercepted the truck, beat up the traders and truck driver and tried to take away the cows. They also snatched away Tk 5,000 from a cattle trader.

The traders' call for help caught the attention of a police patrol team, who arrested four people on the spot. Later, gaining information from the arrestees, the Jubo League leader was arrested.

Man gets life term for raping girl

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

A court in Faridpur sentenced a man to life term imprisonment for raping a girl.

The convict is Milon Khan, 32, a resident of Doibakanapur village under Boalmari upazila in Faridpur.

The Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal in Faridpur also fined the convict Tk 50,000. In default, he will suffer one more year in jail, said a prosecutor of the court.

According to the case statement, Milon raped the girl, who was a minor then, after she refused his marriage proposal on October 2, 2011.

A charge sheet was filed against Milon on December 31, 2011 after the victim's father filed a case with Boalmari Police Station on October 30, 2011.

RCC POST-POLLS VIOLENCE

Man's wrist severed, 3 others injured

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The wrist of a man was severed, and three others were injured in Rajshahi city today in the post-election violence of Rajshahi City Corporation.

The critically injured, Altaf, 45, was sent to Dhaka for better treatment, according to police and family members.

The other injured - Mukul, 45, Mona, 26, and Sajal, 23, - were admitted to the Rajshahi Medical College Hospital, said Suhrawardy Hossain, officer-in-charge of Boalia Police Station.

The incident occurred in the Kulipara area around this noon. Additional police forces have been deployed in the area, added the OC.

According to witnesses, tension has been prevailing between two local groups regarding the election. Despite the local councillor's attempt to settle the dispute, the group clashed yesterday.

Govt agencies fail to control

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crore from the central bank in the last 11 months, the CAB chief said.

"According to economists, borrowing from the central bank leaves a five-fold impact on the market, meaning the supply of money increases by five times ... Borrowing from the central bank to make up the budget deficit is one of the main reasons for inflation," he said.

The CAB made 12 recommendations for reigning in the uncontrolled market situation.

It suggested the Directorate of National Consumer Rights Protection take steps to make wholesalers and retailers display prices at visible places.

The CAB asked the ministers concerned to collect information on production, procurement, demand and supply of essentials.

Biden, Modi hail new era

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The press conference itself was a reflection of contrasting political traditions, marking the first time Modi has taken questions in such a format in his nine-year tenure.

Modi denied that discrimination against minorities existed under his government.

Asked during the press conference by a reporter what steps he was willing to take to "improve the rights of Muslims and other minorities in your country and to uphold free speech," Modi suggested they didn't need to be improved.

"Our Constitution and our government, and we have proved democracy can deliver. When I say deliver; caste, creed, religion, gender - there is no scope for any discrimination (in my government)," Modi told reporters at the White House.

Rights groups say there has been an attack on dissidents, minorities and journalists in India since Modi took office in 2014.

Modi's visit was not without controversy. His planned speech later to a joint meeting of Congress, normally an affirmation of a visiting

leader from an allied nation, was set to be boycotted by a raft of liberal lawmakers.

As 7,000 well-wishers gathered for a colourful opening ceremony at the White House, a far smaller group of demonstrators gathered blocks away to protest the Biden administration's coziness with Modi.

But, for Biden, the benefits of engaging with the world's most populous democracy at a moment of increased tensions with rival China have outweighed both the costs and risks.

"The challenges and opportunities facing the world in this century require that India and the United States work and lead together, and we are," Biden said as he welcomed Modi to the White House. He promised to discuss human rights, freedom and the rule of law with Modi, and told reporters after their talks that they had a "straight forward" discussion.

A festival-like morning ceremony at the White House featured a cappella group Penn Masala performing renditions of songs by the American group Maroon 5 as well as from movies featuring Bollywood superstar Shah Rukh Khan.