

Constable stabbed to death by ‘muggers’

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A police constable was stabbed to death by unidentified assailants in the capitals' Farmgate area before daybreak yesterday.

Moniruzzaman Talukder, 41, who was with the Tejgaon division of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, was attacked when he had just returned to the city after spending Eid in his hometown.

HM Azimul Haque, a deputy commissioner of DMP, said the attack might have been an incident of mugging.



Moniruzzaman Talukder

A p u r b a Hasan, officer-in-charge of Tejgaon Police Station, said the victim was walking to a traffic police office near Tejgaon Railway Station when, according to witnesses, two men attacked him.

DC Azimul said officers had detained three men for questioning and were analysing CCTV footage from the area.

The first call reporting the constable's injuries was made at 4:15am, said Anower Sattar, inspector (media) of the national emergency service.

A police team then rushed to the scene and took him to Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital where doctors pronounced him dead.

Morgue sources said there were two stab injuries on his left leg and two on his left shoulder.

Moniruzzaman joined Bangladesh police in 2002. He is survived by his wife and two sons.

DCAzimul said officers had detained three men for questioning and were analysing CCTV footage from the area.

In another incident, Rakibul Hasan, an assistant producer of Independent TV, was severely injured when suspected muggers stabbed him in Rampura. He was admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.



Japanese Ambassador to Bangladesh Iwama Kiminori, centre, places a wreath at the erstwhile Holey Artisan cafe in the capital's Gulshan to pay respect to the victims of the grisly militant attack on the eatery seven years ago.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

25 killed after bus catches fire in India

AFP, Mumbai

At least 25 people were killed and eight others injured in western India when a bus crashed and caught fire on an expressway early yesterday.

The bus was travelling to the city of Pune when it hit a pole and overturned after midnight, causing its diesel tank to catch fire, senior police officer Baburao Mahamuni told AFP.

"There were about 30 to 35 people in the bus. Twenty-five people have died and eight others are injured," he said.

The injured have been admitted to a hospital near the site of the crash in Maharashtra state, about 400 kilometres (250 miles) east of India's financial capital Mumbai.

The driver and conductor of the bus were taken into custody for questioning, state rural development minister Girish Mahajan told reporters.

"The driver is saying the tyre of the bus burst, after which it hit a pole. But it seems he had dozed off. We will have to see what actually happened," he said.

Mahajan added that the bodies had been charred beyond recognition and forensic teams were on their way to help in identification of the victims.

One of the survivors of the accident

said he got out of the burning vehicle via a window.

"The passenger seated next to me and I managed to escape by breaking the rear window," he told the Press Trust of India (PTI) news agency.

"But not everyone could do it."

A witness to the crash told PTI he unsuccessfully tried to help rescue passengers stuck inside the burning bus.

"We saw people getting burnt alive," he said. "The fire was so intense that we could not do anything."

Police said they had launched an inquiry into the crash.

"The priority at this moment is to identify the bodies and hand them over to their family members," local media quoted police superintendent Sunil Kadasane as saying.

Images published in local media showed the bus engulfed in flames and later the charred remains of the vehicle overturned on the highway.

Three children were among the dead, a police officer told reporters.

"Deeply saddened by the devastating bus mishap in Buldhana," Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Twitter.

"My thoughts and prayers are with the families of those who lost their lives. May the injured recover soon."

SHAHIDUL'S DEATH ILO, US call for thorough investigation

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The International Labour Organization (ILO) and the US want an independent investigation into the recent killing of labour leader Shahidul Islam in Gazipur.

"We call for a thorough and independent investigation and for the protection and advancement of union leaders' human and labour rights," said the Bureau of International Labour Affairs in a tweet on Thursday.

The tweet condemned the murder of Shahidul, 50, president of Gazipur unit of Bangladesh Garment and Industrial Workers Federation, who was beaten to death right after he left a meeting at a factory where he had been negotiating to get its workers their arrears on the night of June 25.

In a separate statement, the ILO on Friday encouraged the authorities to do their utmost to bring those responsible for this crime to justice and to ensure a peaceful industrial relations environment for workers and employers to engage in joint problem-solving.

Freedom fighter beaten to death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jamalpur

A freedom fighter was beaten to death in Jamalpur's Islampur yesterday by his neighbour over a quarrel about draining accumulated rainwater from his yard.

Sader Ali, 70, was a former teacher at Islamia Fazil Madrasa Islampur.

The incident took place in Rouharkanda village, Partshi union.

Quoting locals, Majedur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Islampur Police Station, said Sadek Ali got into an argument with his neighbour Dukhu Mia when he was removing accumulated rainwater from his yard.

At one stage, Dukhu Mia and his men attacked Sadek Ali, leaving him seriously injured.

Later, locals rescued him and took him to the Islampur Upazila Health Complex, where an on-duty doctor declared him dead.

Police detained three people for interrogation, said the OC.

UNGA SYRIA VOTE Momen clarifies Dhaka's abstention

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh abstained from voting on the UN resolution on the disappearance of 130,000 Syrians as it did not want to make it a "political issue".

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen told this to The Daily Star yesterday after an event at the Foreign Service Academy in the capital.

A foreign ministry official said Bangladesh's general principle is to abstain from voting on any country-specific resolution, except for those on Myanmar as Bangladesh becomes directly affected by Myanmar's actions related to Rohingyas.

Bangladesh and India are among the 62 countries which abstained from voting on the resolution adopted by the UN General Assembly on June 29 on a mechanism to help the families of the 130,000 Syrians know the whereabouts of their relatives and loved ones.

Police shoot buffalo, hit bystander instead

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narayanganj

Police, while trying to capture a buffalo that had gone wild in Narayanganj's Araihaazar on Friday, mistakenly shot a young man, who is now receiving treatment at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

Md Shanto, 24, of the Duptara area of Araihaazar, was not critically injured, claimed police.

Shanto was shot on the morning of the second day of Eid and subsequently taken to the hospital by police.

According to police and locals, the buffalo escaped from a cattle market the night before Eid and was causing havoc in the area. It had even injured two people.

On Friday morning, police went to the area, found the buffalo, and shot at it.

Araihaazar Police Station Officer-in-Charge (OC) Imdadul Islam Tayyab said, "Police fired at the buffalo, but hit the young man in his stomach by mistake."

Revisiting the horror

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machetes, grenades, and semi-automatic rifles stormed the restaurant while shouting "Allahu Akbar" and began shooting randomly.

The silence was shattered by shrieks and screams. The terrified and bewildered diners hid under tables as the restaurant staff scurried for safety.

Holding the diners hostage, they sorted out non-Muslim targets by a grim test of reciting verses from the Holy Quran.

The worst-ever hostage crisis of the nation unfolded. It wasn't until the next morning, around 12 hours later, that para commandos broke the siege, killing the five attackers and a chef.

At the scene, they found evidence of mindless butchery, with the restaurant's floor smeared in blood and strewn with bodies.

Amidst the cruelty that shook the country to its core, a young man -- aged only 20 -- stood out as an example of courage, friendship, and humanity.

Faraaz Ayaaz Hossain, who went to the restaurant to meet his friends, could have walked free but refused to abandon his friends, choosing to stay with them even in the face of terror and death.

Faraaz, a student of Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, and his friends Abinta Kabir, a US citizen of Bangladesh origin and of the same university, and Tarishi Jain, an Indian and a student of the University of California, Berkeley, were among those killed.

Carried out by IS-inspired outfit, known as Neo JMB, formed by a faction of Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), the attack served as a wake-up call for the government and triggered a massive hunt for militants and crackdown on terror networks.

Law enforcers succeeded in busting a number of militant dens through counter-terrorism

operations. The mastermind of the attack -- Tamim Ahmed Chowdhury, a Bangladesh-origin Canadian -- was killed during one such drive on August 27, 2016.

Tamim spearheaded the Neo JMB after coming to Bangladesh in 2013 and took charge as its chief in 2015. On July 11 that year, his group joined mainstream JMB leader Sarwar Jahan Manik's group. Sarwar was also killed in a drive on October 8, 2016.

Since the café attack, law enforcers carried out more than two dozen anti-militancy operations at dens where at least 79 militants were killed and a huge quantity of explosives were destroyed or seized.

Amidst the cruelty that shook the country to its core, a young man -- aged only 20 -- stood out as an example of courage, friendship, and humanity.

Following the massacre, a case was filed with Gulshan police under the Anti-Terrorism Act.

On November 27, 2019, the Anti-Terrorism Special Tribunal in Dhaka sentenced seven militants to death for their involvement in the attack, terming it a disgraceful attack aimed at assassinating the non-communal character of Bangladesh.

"Through this disgraceful attack, an attempt was made to assassinate the non-communal character of Bangladesh. Foreigners here suffered from a sense of insecurity. The positive image of Bangladesh, known for peace and harmony, was tarnished a bit," said the court in its verdict.

The High Court has started hearing of the death reference and appeals of the case in May this year. The hearing is expected to be completed in the next few months, and the HC will then deliver a judgment.

Caught in the eye of the storm

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the attack claimed 22 lives, including nine Italians, seven Japanese and an Indian.

In an exclusive interview with The Daily Star, Jahangir, now working as an additional deputy commissioner (Gulshan division) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, recounts, "Initially, our plan was to assess the situation and work out a strategy accordingly. However, upon hearing the desperate plea of a man, we made the decision to enter the premises and initiate a rescue operation."

The entrance of the Holey Artisan Bakery appeared partially open but the voice seemed to emanate from the side of the clinic. "That's why we cautiously slunk towards the clinic," Jahangir says.

Jahangir and his team rescued the man who was later identified as the driver of Faraaz Ayaaz Hossain, one of three Bangladeshis killed inside the café that night.

"While rescuing the man, we encountered no resistance from the side of the clinic. It was at that moment we realised the attackers were inside the café."

Jahangir and his team proceeded to enter the café. Adjacent to the entrance was a lawn, eerily empty.

"As we cautiously moved towards the café, we noticed a gas cylinder placed at the entrance. It dawned on us

that this was not an ordinary criminal attack but the work of well-trained terrorists," Jahangir continues.

Feeling a surge of fear, Jahangir realised they were trapped in a perilous situation as several high-ranking police officers followed the SWAT team.

On the evening of July 1, the then DMP Commissioner Asaduzzaman Mia was attending a programme in Gulshan. When the shooting incident was reported instantly within the force, he, along with a team of additional commissioners, joint commissioners and deputy commissioners, rushed to the spot and trailed behind the SWAT team to get a clear picture of what was going on.

Jahangir promptly gestured for everyone to retreat, lowering his weapon and raising his hands in the air.

"I spoke loudly to the senior police officers, urging them to exit. I said that we could engage with the armed men inside the café later, hoping that those inside could hear me," he explains.

The high-ranking officers began to retreat slowly. Jahangir's team divided into two groups and ensured their safe evacuation.

The unimaginable struck them soon after. A grenade lay in their path. Jahangir and his team figured it out later that the grenade was somehow dislodged from a flower tub where it was originally planted.

"One of my team members, Sub-Inspector Sujon Kundo, spotted it and motioned to me," Jahangir recounts.

Jahangir instantly instructed Sujon to defuse the grenade.

Sujon, known for his bravery, bent over the explosive and instructed others to move away from him. Unfortunately, the grenade's pin got removed, resulting in a deafening explosion.



The explosion caused severe injuries to Jahangir and his entire team. Sujon bore the brunt of the blast and was left critically wounded. "We were all left in a state of shock and disbelief, overwhelmed by the impact of the blast and shrapnel," Jahangir recalls.

At least 11 to 12 other officers were injured by the explosion. Among them were Rabiul Karim, an assistant commissioner of the detective branch, and Salahuddin Ahmed, an officer-in-charge.

Tears welled up in Jahangir's eyes

Green chilli sells for Tk 700 a kg!

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Al Amin, a vegetable vendor at Karwan Bazar, said he bought green chilli for Tk 360 a kg on Friday night and sold it for Tk 400.

Yesterday, he had to buy for Tk 500 a kg and sell it for Tk 600.

A day labourer from East Tejuri Bazar wanted to buy green chilli worth Tk 10 from Al Amin. But the vendor refused to sell such a small amount. The labourer finally bought 10 chillies for Tk 20.

Ashraful Alam, a wholesaler at Karwan Bazar, said that he usually

sells 500 kgs of green chilli every day. But on Friday, he managed to buy 100 kgs for Tk 350 per kg and sold it for Tk 360 per kg.

The next day, he had to purchase green chilli for Tk 550 a kg from Modhukhali Bazar in Faridpur. He was selling his Friday's unsold stock of 40 kgs yesterday.

Traders said green chilli is brought to Dhaka mainly from Faridpur, Rajshahi, and Rangpur. Previously, the bulk of the supply used to come from Nilphamari, Bogura, and Manikganj.

Yesterday, retailers in Manikganj

town were selling green chilli for Tk 650 a kg.

Saidur Rahman, a wholesaler in Manikganj, said the green chilli produced in the district are sent to the different district across the country. However, the crop was damaged this year due to bad weather.

In Bagerhat's Rampal upazila, a vegetable trader in Gilatola Bazar said he refrained from buying green chilli yesterday due to high wholesale prices.

"I decided not to buy green chilli after the wholesaler asked for Tk 650

per kg," he told The Daily Star.

In Pabna, the retail price of green chilli crossed Tk 700 per kg yesterday. Wholesalers sold chillies for over Tk 600 a kg.

"Chilli cultivation was hampered this year due to bad weather. That's why the production has fallen compared to last year," said Md Idris Ali, a development officer at the Department of Agricultural Extension in Pabna.

Our correspondents in Pabna and Manikganj contributed to this report.