

Jubo League leader stabbed to death; 4 held

Before death, he named BNP-Jamaat men as attackers, say police

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Bogura*

A Jubo League leader was stabbed to death in Sundarganj upazila of Gaibandha Sunday night, police said yesterday.



Zahidul Islam

The deceased, Zahidul Islam, 38, of Baidyanath village in the upazila, was the president of Jubo League's Sonaray union unit.

KM Azmiruzzaman, officer-in-charge of Sundarganj Police Station, told The Daily Star, "After the attack, Zahidul told police at the upazila health complex that Jamaat-BNP activists carried out the attack on him."

He also mentioned the names of some of the attackers before he breathed his last, the OC said, adding, "We have detained four suspects so far."

The murder took place in Mara Shakha Bridge area on Sundarganj-Bamondanga road around 11:00pm.

"From 2013 to 2015, BNP-Jamaat men ran rampant in this area. Zahidul was very active and protested their misdeeds as a Jubo League leader."

President of Sundarganj Upazila Jubo League unit

Quoting Zahidul and locals, police said at least seven people stopped his motorcycle when he was returning home.

The gang stabbed Zahidul, critically injuring him, police said.

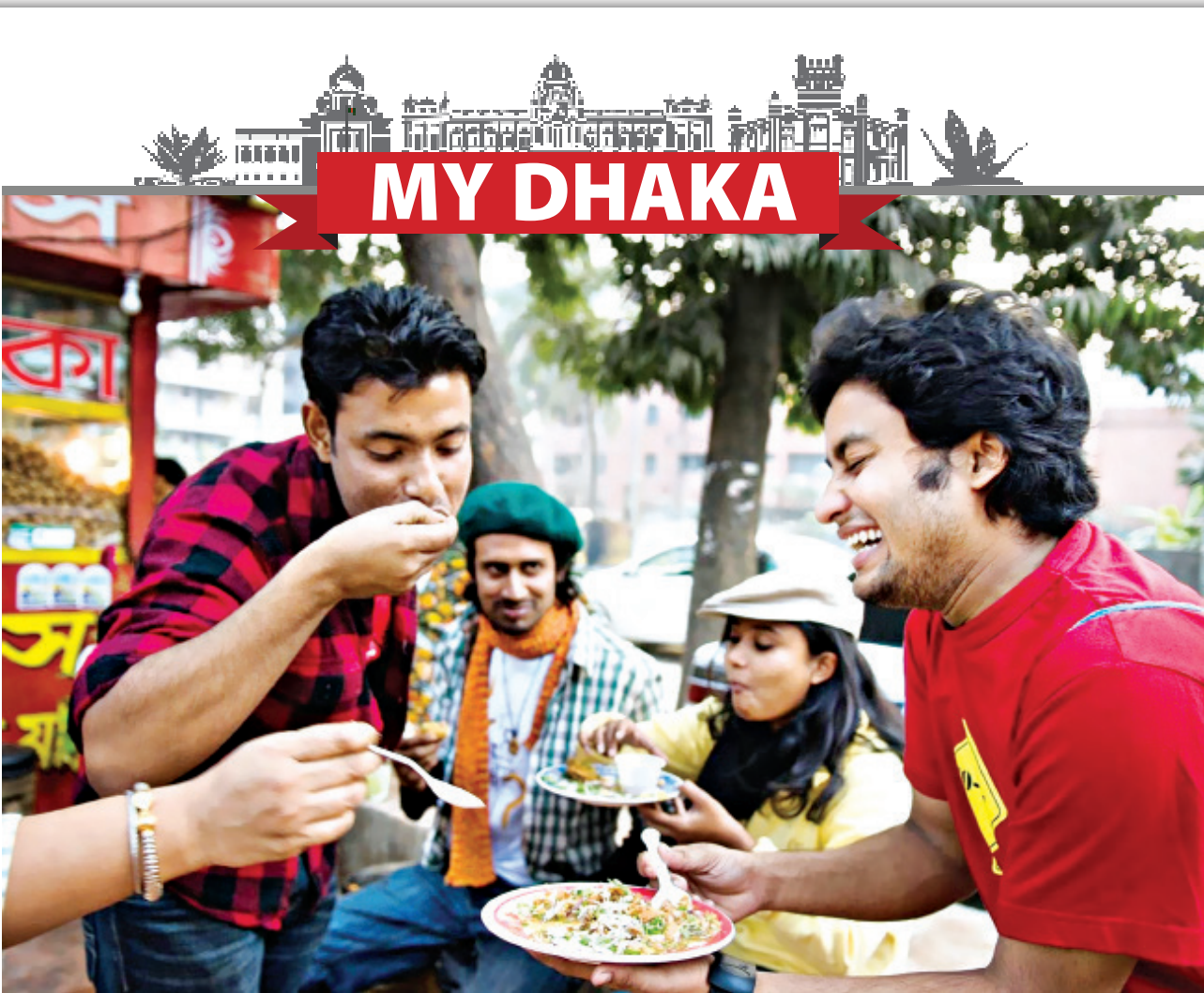
Locals took him to the local upazila health complex. Later, he was shifted to Rangpur Medical College Hospital, where he died from his injuries.

Mizanur Rahman Litu, president of Sundarganj Upazila Jubo League unit, told The Daily Star, "From 2013 to 2015, BNP-Jamaat men ran rampant in this area. Zahidul was very active and protested their misdeeds as a Jubo League leader."

Harbouring resentment all this time, BNP-Jamaat men killed him out of spite, Litu suspected.

"We have protested Zahid's murder and demanded a proper investigation and trial of the killers," said Mizanur.

Filing of a case in this regard was underway, OC Azmiruzzaman said.



PHOTOS: **SAZZAD IBNE SAYED**

Tradition meets innovation in the SPICY WORLD OF FUCHKA

RBR

Fuchka carts parked in neighbourhood alleys or in front of city parks and lakes are something synonymous with Dhaka. The concoction of spicy, flavourful fuchka-chotpoti on a plate is a palate teaser undoubtedly, and we all have our favourite fuchka places. Chotpoti-fuchka cart at Fusion Café in Gulshan, the fuchka shops of Pink City and Shimanto Square, and the corner snack bar at Chadni Chawk are some of the all-time favourites.

Amid stiff competition from vendors selling kebabs, burgers, chow mein and other snacks (all with their local twists) the age-old menu comprising solely of fuchka-chotpoti is gone forever.

The tok or sour tamarind water has always been one of the fuchka wallah's best-kept secrets and that is primarily what differentiates each vendor's recipe from his competitors. Recently, the fuchka wallahs have decided to be innovative and started to add variation

to their time-tested recipe. So, the sour water has been meddled with and some are now serving sweetened tamarind water instead.

For many, it has ruined the hot and spicy fuchka kick altogether, while others hail this innovation in the local street food scene.

Some carts now have a curated menu for tamarind water choices, mint and yoghurt to name a few. The tok made with the popular Naga morich (Naga Viper pepper) is also a new addition. Certainly not for the faint-hearted, this extremely hot concoction has taken the fuchka-chotpoti experience to another level.

There is a particular corner in food street Bailey Road, where a young man has popularised his many additions to the sour list. The popularity of the fuchka cart depends on this sour water variation now.

Chotpoti-fuchka carts are also offering doi fuchka, which was never

a thing in the long history of Dhaka's street food scene. Not exactly a café recipe but they have managed a clotted version of fuchka in yoghurt in the carts. Doi fuchka is made with chilled yoghurt and tamarind pulp, it has always been a special offer in the cafes but never on the streets. Roll Express almost has a cult following for its doi fuchka.

Panipuri, also not a common item in the street food scene until now, is a Kolkata version of our fuchka. It is also called golgappa and a single piece is served on a small cup made out of dried jackfruit leaves, where the fuchka is found swimming in the tamarind water. It is meant to be eaten in one gulp and is topped up by the seller as many times as you want.

Last year, fuchka marked its place in the world culinary map as it made its way to the list of "50 of the best street foods in Asia" by CNN. The changes that we have seen in the local, street food scene only hint at the many changes that are yet to come. Undoubtedly, the fuchka will go through additions and subtractions to its menu. However, one thing is for certain, it has a place cemented in our palates.



Hold dialogue without any conditions

FROM PAGE 1

Central Asian Affairs.

"The US wants a free, fair, and neutral election in Bangladesh in a congenial atmosphere. As a friendly country, they want to see this in Bangladesh," GM Quader told The Daily Star, quoting Haas.

Although the letter was not made public, Quader said Lu in the letter mentioned two things: free and fair polls in Bangladesh and unconditional dialogue among the political parties.

A JP leader who was present at the meeting read out key points of the letter. "The United States values its partnership with Bangladesh and urged all parties to put democratic principles into practice to deliver free, fair, and peaceful elections to the people of Bangladesh," he said.

Meanwhile, AL Office Secretary Biplab Barua told The Daily Star at 10:30pm that they were yet to receive any letter from Lu.

Contacted, BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi said the party received the letter. He, however, made no further comments.

The US move comes with days to go until the election schedule is announced.

Meanwhile, in a statement yesterday, US embassy spokesperson Stephen Ibelli said Haas has requested meetings with senior officials of the three major political parties to underscore the US position regarding the upcoming elections.

Calling for free and fair elections conducted in a peaceful manner and urging all sides to eschew violence and exercise restraint, the statement said the US does not favour any political party over the other.

It urged all sides to engage in dialogue without preconditions.

The statement said the US would continue to implement its "3C

policy" in an even-handed manner against those who undermine the democratic election process.

The "3C policy" is the new visa policy under which the US restricts the issuance of visas for any Bangladeshi believed to be responsible for, or complicit in, undermining the democratic election process in Bangladesh.

The US nudge for talks comes when the AL is adamant about having the elections with this government in power and the BNP and some of its like-minded parties are on the streets enforcing blockades demanding the resignation of the government and polls under a neutral caretaker government.

Many of the BNP's leaders are either on the run or in jail since October 28, when its rally in Nayapaltan was foiled.

The Election Commission said it would announce the election schedule soon and that the polls would be held before January 29 at any cost.

When asked what the letter meant, former foreign secretary M Touhid Hossain said the US position did not change. It rather reiterated its position and expectations.

Humayun Kabir, former Bangladesh ambassador to the US, echoed Touhid.

"They have been talking [about] this for quite a long time now but sending letter to the political parties is a formal approach. They expect that all the parties will respect it."

Prof Shantanu Majumder of Political Science at Dhaka University welcomed the US call for unconditional dialogue among political parties.

This is the only way out of the deadlock that has been created over the polls-time administration, he said. "The alternative to dialogue is conflict. None of us wants conflict," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

The blockade and related violence has already caused a sense of fear among people, and dialogue among the political parties without any conditions and with open minds can definitely pave the way for a good election, he said, adding that dialogue with conditions was meaningless.

"I am not sure how much the US call will be heeded by the political parties, but the call is positive," he said.

On October 31, Haas met Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Habibur Awal and later told journalists that he hoped all parties would engage in an unconditional dialogue and facilitate free and peaceful elections in Bangladesh.

On May 24, the US imposed the visa restrictions. Eighteen months before this, Washington slapped sanctions on Rab and seven of its current and former officials for human rights violations.

The US has been critical of the last two national elections. In 2021, it did not invite Bangladesh to the democracy summit to promote the Biden administration's foreign policy priorities, democracy, and human rights.

JP ON POLLS

Asked whether the Jatiya Party told Haas anything about the polls, JP Secretary General Mujibul Haque Chunnun, who was at the meeting, said, "It's our internal affairs. It is the responsibility of the Election Commission to hold the election in a free and fair manner. And the government will assist the EC in this regard."

When he was queried if JP would run, Chunnun said they were prepared for the polls. "We are still waiting to see whether the government creates a congenial atmosphere so that voters can cast their votes at their will and without any obstacles," Chunnun said.

Probe rights abuses, protect civil rights

FROM PAGE 1

Germany echoed the same, asking Bangladesh to ensure all liberties for the people during the upcoming national elections, while Slovakia asked to ensure the polls are participatory.

In response, Law Minister Anisul Huq said holding elections under a caretaker government – something the opposition has been demanding – is "completely unconstitutional and illegal".

Meanwhile, the UK recommended that Bangladesh guarantee freedoms of expression and assembly without restrictions.

The US also asked Bangladesh to hold security agencies accountable for human rights violations.

Other countries making the same recommendations include Australia, who said it was "deeply concerned about the extrajudicial executions and enforced disappearances".

Slovakia asked Bangladesh to thoroughly investigate such violations.

Both Sierra Leone and Finland told Bangladesh to ratify the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.

To this, the law minister said that before ratifying more conventions and optional protocols, "we [Bangladesh] are investing in national institutions – particularly to ensure proper implementation of existing mechanisms".

The ratification of this convention, however, has been a long-standing demand. During the last UPR cycle in 2018, eight states had recommended it.

The member states also recommended that Bangladesh do more to ensure freedom of expression and amend or repeal the Cyber Security Act.

Switzerland asked for the Cyber Security Act 2023 to be amended to bring it to line with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, while Sweden asked for

laws governing the digital space to conform to international standards.

Australia further asked Bangladesh to safeguard the freedom of expression by amending provisions of the CSA that criminalise free speech.

The Netherlands also expressed concerns at the increased intimidation of media personnel and rights activists.

Slovakia further asked Bangladesh to prevent arbitrary arrests and torture against civil society activists, lawyers and journalists for criticising the government, and to ensure that the press can work without threats, physical assaults and killings.

UN MEMBER STATES RECOMMEND:

- Protection of civil rights
- Free, fair trials of enforced disappearances
- Thorough probes into extra-judicial killings
- National elections be participatory

To this, Anisul said "the use of force has been reasonable, restrained and minimal".

As many as seven member states called on Bangladesh to abolish the death penalty.

Ukraine, Spain, Slovakia and Slovenia asked for the establishment of an official moratorium on the death penalty pending full abolition in Bangladesh.

The law minister responded by saying the death sentence is being phased out.

Prior to the UPR, the government had submitted a report, in which

TCB to sell essentials at subsidised rate in city

Low-income families without TCB cards can also buy the items

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government today will start selling soybean oil, potatoes, onions, and lentils at subsidised rates in Dhaka to alleviate the suffering of low-income consumers, especially those without TCB family cards.

The programme will run alongside the monthly sale of subsidised essentials conducted by the state-run Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) among one crore family cardholders across the country.

The special initiative has been taken to stabilise commodity prices in the capital's kitchen markets, said Senior Commerce Secretary Tapan Kanti Ghosh at a press conference in the secretariat yesterday.

The goods will be sold on 30 OMS (open market sale) trucks stationed at different locations throughout both city corporations, with the goal of reaching 9,000 beneficiaries on the weekdays.

Soybean oil will be sold at Tk 100 per litre, potato at Tk 30 per kilogramme (kg), onion at Tk 50 a kg and lentil at Tk 60 per kg.

Doctor beaten for refusing needless tests

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Mymensingh*

A private clinic owner and his brokers assaulted a doctor in Mymensingh for not writing prescriptions for more tests at his diagnostic centre, said Dhobaura upazila health officer.

Dr Salahuddin Ahmed, a sub-assistant community medical officer at Dhobaura Upazila Health Complex, was undergoing treatment at the hospital yesterday.

Upazila Health and Family Planning Officer Dr AKM Abu Syed said Abdus Samad, owner of Eti Diagnostic Centre, entered Dr Salahuddin's room on Sunday at 2:00pm and charged him for not ordering additional tests for patients and offered suggestions for his diagnostic centre.

An altercation ensued, and at one stage, Samad and some of his clinic brokers assaulted the doctor, seriously injuring him, before fleeing the scene.

The victim lodged a case accusing Samad yesterday morning, said Tipu Sultan, officer-in-charge of Dhobaura Police Station.

"Police are trying to arrest the accused," said the OC.

Woman's hanging body recovered

UNB, *Chattogram*

Police recovered the body of a woman hanging from her home in Sitakunda upazila of Chattogram yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Fatema Begum, 20, wife of Rabiul Hossain of Mandaritolta area in Barabkunda union.

Khurshid Alam, sub-inspector (SI) of Sitakunda Police Station, said police recovered the woman's body from the Barabkunda union.

The body was sent to the Chattogram Medical College Hospital morgue for an autopsy, he added.

"The woman is believed to have committed suicide by hanging herself. The cause of the suicide is not known," the OC also added.

it had reiterated the same, to the

UNHRC.

"Bangladesh continues to consider the death sentence to be appropriate for the most heinous crimes. However, Bangladesh is gradually reducing the application of the death penalty with other punishments such as life-imprisonment," the report had said.

Several member states like the Netherlands, Iceland and Australia also told Bangladesh to abolish section-377 of the penal code and decriminalise same-sex relations.

India made recommendations about strengthening the education system and improving the health infrastructure in rural areas, but said nothing about other human rights.

Russia too only recommended that Bangladesh provide equal access to education to women, and that it continues giving importance to human trafficking.

South Asia worst in world for water scarcity: UN

AFP, NEW DELHI

More children in South Asia are struggling due to severe water scarcity made worse by the impacts of climate change than anywhere else worldwide, the United Nations said yesterday.

"A staggering 347 million children under 18 are exposed to high or extremely high water scarcity in South Asia, the highest number among all regions in the world," the UN children's agency said in a report.

The eight-nation region, comprising Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, is home to more than one-quarter of the world's children.

"Climate change is disrupting weather patterns and rainfall, leading to unpredictable water availability," the UN said in its report.