

Journo beaten up by supporters of ward councillor

OUR CORRESPONDENT, JAMALPUR

A journalist from Jamalpur's Bakshiganj upazila was assaulted allegedly by supporters of a local ward councillor last evening.

Matin Rahman, the Bakshiganj correspondent of The Daily Bhorer Darpan, was admitted to the upazila health complex.

He was attacked in the Namapara area of Bakshiganj municipality while collecting information on a clash between the supporters of councillor-elect Kamruzzaman Sujan and the supporters of defeated councillor candidate Zainal Abedin around 6:30pm.

On Saturday, Kamruzzaman Sujan was elected councillor of Ward No 5 of Bakshiganj municipality in the by-election.

The supporters of the winning candidate launched an attack on the residence of the defeated candidate, said local journalists.

On information, Matin and another journalist went to the spot to collect the news about the incident, they added.

Journalist Matin Rahman said, "I went to the spot to take the statement of the accused, Touhid, who attacked the house of a supporter of the defeated councillor. At that time, a group of 20-25 men, led by Touhid, attacked



Matin Rahman

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Palestinians search for their belongings amid the rubble of houses destroyed by Israeli bombardment in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Man dies after attack by ward councillor's men

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A man died at a Chattogram hospital yesterday while being treated for injuries he sustained after being attacked at his home by a local ward councillor's men, during a dispute over the due rent of a flat in the port city's Panchlaish area.

The victim, Nayan Chowdhury, 34, was assaulted early Saturday by followers of Mobarak Ali, councillor of Paschim Sholoshohor Ward under the Chattogram City Corporation, said Chattogram Metropolitan Police Assistant Commissioner (Panchlaish) Arif Hossen.

"Nayan, along with his two brothers, used to rent a flat in Muradpur, but haven't paid rent for four years. To collect the due rent, the landlord complained to Mobarak's office. Following this, Mobarak's men showed up at the flat early Saturday and assaulted Nayan, leaving him seriously injured."

He was first taken to Chattogram Medical College Hospital (CMCH), from where he was transferred to a private hospital as his condition deteriorated, said the police official.

"The victim's family did not inform police following the incident. Police learned the matter after his death," said Sontosh Kumar Chakma, officer-in-charge (OC) of Panchlaish Police Station.

A case was lodged in this connection and the body was handed over to the family after an autopsy at the CMCH morgue, he added.

Police detained one Hossain-ul-Islam in this connection.

Meanwhile, the accused, Mobarak Ali, could not be contacted over the phone despite repeated attempts.

US trying to meddle in Russian presidential polls

Says Moscow's spy service; Sweden joining Nato shows Putin 'failed': Nato chief

AGENCIES

President Vladimir Putin's foreign intelligence service yesterday accused the United States of trying to meddle in Russia's presidential election and said that Washington even had plans to launch a cyberattack on the online voting system.

Putin, who is almost certain to win the March 15-17 presidential election, has warned the West that any attempts by foreign powers to meddle in the ballot would be considered an act of aggression, according to Reuters.

Russia's SVR Foreign Intelligence Service said in a statement it had information that US President Joe Biden's administration had set out to meddle in the election, state media reported.

"According to information received by the Foreign Intelligence Service of the Russian Federation, the administration of J. Biden is setting a task for American NGOs to achieve a decrease in turnout,"

the SVR was cited as saying.

"With the participation of leading American IT specialists, it is planned to carry out cyberattacks on the remote electronic voting system, which will make it impossible to count the votes of a significant proportion of Russian voters," the SVR said.

The SVR, the main successor to the KGB's First Directorate foreign spying service, did not set out any evidence for its assertions. There was no immediate reaction from Washington.

The West casts Putin as a dictator, a war criminal and a killer who has led Russia into an imperial-style land grab that has weakened Russia and forged Ukrainian statehood, while uniting the West and handing Nato a post-Cold War mission.

Putin casts the Ukraine war as an existential battle between a "sacred" Russian civilisation and an arrogant West which he says is in cultural, political and economic decline and which sought to humiliate Russia

after the fall of the Soviet Union.

The Kremlin last week said that Russia will not meddle in the November US presidential election, and dismissed American findings that Moscow orchestrated campaigns to sway both the 2016 and 2020 US presidential elections.

Putin, Russia's paramount leader since the last day of 1999, has dropped a series of ironic remarks about the US election, saying that he finds Joe Biden preferable as the next US president to Donald Trump.

Elsewhere, Nato chief Jens Stoltenberg said yesterday that Sweden's accession to the US-led alliance showed Russian President Vladimir Putin had "failed" in his Ukrainian war strategy of weakening it, reports AFP.

The Kremlin's invasion not only prompted formerly non-aligned nations Sweden and Finland to come under Nato's defence umbrella, but now "Ukraine is closer to Nato membership than ever before," Stoltenberg said.

Nagad's user info in public domain

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The information that was obtained within a second include NID number, name, date of birth, father's name, mother's name and address. They are unable to access, or output transaction data of customers.

The Telegram bot started operating in November 2023, while the channel was created on January 31, 2024. The website was created on January 27, 2024.

All of the Telegram channels had names with the word "Nagad" in it.

In a written response on March 7, Nagad said that "personal information of Nagad customers remains completely secure and free from all forms of risks."

In order to verify if only Nagad's user information was being returned, The Daily Star ran searches from February 23-March 6 with phone numbers not linked to Nagad, or phone numbers linked to other mobile financial services, and neither this specific bot nor this specific website returned any results.

Within the Telegram channels and bots, the user data requested was shared publicly, such that all those within those groups could have access to it.

It was impossible for The Daily Star to ascertain who ran the Telegram channel, bot or the website since all the information was masked.

The Telegram channel claims that it was reproducing the information from the "KYC" or "Know Your Customer" database.

Nagad denied this, calling it a "smear campaign."

"Nagad stores all personal identification of customers in encrypted format. However, it is disheartening to observe that vested interests are trying to take advantage of this situation by launching a smear campaign against Nagad across various platforms including social media," it said in its response

to The Daily Star.

KYC is a step that customers must complete in order to have a functioning account. This is mandatory under Bangladesh Mobile Financial Services Regulations 2022.

The step entails uploading scans of the NID of the customer, following which, the app extracts all relevant information from the card and auto-fills them into the customer's profile.

Although the KYC database also stores photos of the user, the bots and websites tested out by this newspaper were unable to return those.

"We have promptly taken effective measures in response even though there may not have been any data breach from our end. Besides, we have also got our systems reviewed by security consultants to ensure no system vulnerability persists. It needs to be mentioned that Nagad uses state-of-the-art technology and security infrastructure & framework to secure its system above all customers' information," said Nagad.

Nagad has over 80 million registered users making it one of the two leading mobile financial service operators in Bangladesh. Their daily transactions go over \$111 million, according to a Nagad press release issued in August 2023.

This probable leak follows the heels of multiple similar leaks of citizen data last year. One such leak was from the government's land tax portal.

According to the National Cyber Security Index updated on January 31, 2024, Bangladesh scored a zero in the category of protection of personal data.

Bangladesh however scored highly in "cyber incident response" which judges how effectively breaches or leaks are managed. Its global ranking is 24.

All of the information found

in these leaks is classified as personal data, according to the data protection bill, which upholds the right to privacy.

The bill was approved in principle by the cabinet, but it is yet to be passed as a law. It states that personal data cannot be collected or processed by anyone without the user's consent.

It acknowledges that data privacy is a right. It also legally puts the onus on the data collector to alert "data subjects" within 72 hours in case there is a personal data breach.

Violations of the law carry administrative fines.

The Bangladesh MFS Regulations 2022 protects confidentiality of customer transactions information, but mentions nothing about personal data.

In the case of traditional banks, however, customers' data are confidential and the banks cannot share the data except with relevant regulatory or law enforcement authorities as per the local laws, said Md Saimum Reza Talukder, a senior lecturer who teaches cyber law at BRAC University. Even then, they need authorisation from a court.

Around the world, failure to comply with data protection laws may bring serious consequences for businesses both in the short and long term. It not only results in legal and financial penalties and sanctions, but also diminishes a company's reputation, he said.

"For example, according to General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) of the European Union, if client's data is infringed due to a company's failure to use appropriate technical measure, a temporary or definitive ban on data processing and a fine up to 20 million euros or 4 percent of the business's total annual worldwide turnover, whichever is higher, can be imposed," said Talukder.

Space station crew bound for Earth

AFP, Washington

Four astronauts left the International Space Station yesterday and were bound for Earth following a more than six-month mission.

Led by American astronaut Jasmin Moghbeli, Nasa's Crew-7 arrived at the research platform last August aboard a SpaceX Crew Dragon.

The same spacecraft undocked

on Monday morning, with Andreas Mogensen of Denmark, Satoshi Furukawa of Japan, and Russian cosmonaut Konstantin Borisov also on board.

Moghbeli, who was making her first spaceflight, paid tribute to the post-Cold War international partnership that paved the way for the construction of the ISS in the 1990s.

"It's an indication of what we

can do when we work together," she said during a farewell ceremony on Sunday.

"To think back to when this was just a dream itself, and the people that had the vision, the grit and the courage to pursue this orbiting laboratory in low Earth orbit, I'm really proud to be a part of this."

Nasa and SpaceX are targeting as soon as 5:35 am Tuesday (0935 GMT) for a splashdown off the Florida coast.

Prices of Ramadan essentials surge

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120, up from Tk 80, tomatoes Tk 50-60 per kg, up from Tk 40-50, and grass peas at Tk 130 per kg, which was Tk 120.

Furthermore, prices of some other Ramadan essentials, including Tang and Rooh Afza, have also risen.

Prices of both local and imported fruits have increased by Tk 10-50 within the last week.

Expressing frustration, people from low- and fixed-income groups said that while the government has pledged to maintain the affordability of daily essentials, there has been no

visible action and all items are now being sold at high prices.

Habibur Rahman, a resident of the Moghbazara area, came to Karwan Bazar to buy daily essentials for a week.

"I brought Tk 5,000 with me as I thought it would be enough to purchase a week's worth of essentials. However, once I reached the kitchen market, I realised it isn't enough. I had to spend half of it [Tk 2,500] just on two items - chicken and dates. I had to reduce the quantities of the essentials I had to buy to be able to

afford all the items."

Like him, many others purchasing daily essentials in different kitchen markets in the capital expressed disappointment.

SM Nazer Hossain, vice president of the Consumers Association of Bangladesh, said the businessmen treats Ramadan like their "profit-making month".

"The government has pledged to keep the prices of daily essentials at a tolerable level, but we can't see any implementation. It remains only on paper."

Confusion over school closure in Ramadan

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We need to plan on our work beforehand if the schools remain open," said Anika Rahman, a mother of two children.

The authorities should take a decision in this regard at the earliest, said Farhana Ahmed, mother of a student.

"We are receiving many calls from the guardians about the closure of the institution - we are also confused about whether classes will be held in Ramadan," said Sadeka Begum, principal of Ispahani Girls' School and College in Dhaka's Moghbazara.

The ministry is yet to take a

decision on keeping the schools shut, said MA Khair, public relations officer of the education ministry.

The HC order for the closure of schools will remain in force following the SC chamber judge's order, AKM Faiz, the lawyer who represented the writ petitioner, told The Daily Star yesterday.

However, Deputy Attorney General Sk Shaifuzzaman said as the government authorities concerned are yet to receive the certified copy of the HC order, there is no bar to keeping the schools open today.

During the hearing yesterday, Justice Rahim questioned what will

happen if the schools remain closed for 10 to 15 days during Ramadan.

Attorney General AM Amin Uddin told the court that keeping schools open during Ramadan is a policy decision of the government.

The HC cannot interfere with the decision, he said, adding that academic activities will be hampered if the schools are kept closed during the entire month of Ramadan.

Opposing the state's petition, Faiz argued that if the schools were kept open during the holy month, traffic congestion would get worse and the fasting students and their parents would have to endure suffering.

TK 600CR INCOME TAX SC asks HC to rehear Grameen Kalyan's petitions

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court yesterday asked its High Court Division to hold further hearing on two writ petitions that challenged the NBR orders asking Grameen Kalyan to pay around Tk 600 crore as income tax.

The HC bench, led by Justice Muhammad Khurshid Alam Sarkar, has been ordered to hold the rehearing and dispose of the petitions in three months.

A five-member bench of the Appellate Division of the SC, headed by Chief Justice Obaidul Hassan, passed the order after hearing two leave to appeal petitions filed by the National Board of Revenue (NBR) against the HC verdict on the writ petitions.

The four other judges of the bench are Justice M Enayetur Rahim, Justice Md Ashfaqul Islam, Justice Md Abu Zafar Siddique and Justice Jahangir Hossain Selim.

The NBR reassessed Grameen Kalyan's income tax for the tax years 2011-12 to 2016-17 and asked Grameen Kalyan to pay the amount.

Disposing of the two writ petitions, the HC bench led by Justice Muhammad Khurshid Alam Sarkar last year allowed the Grameen Kalyan to lodge an appeal with the appellate authority of the NBR challenging its reassessment of the income tax.

Grameen Kalyan is a non-profitable and charitable organisation founded by Nobel laureate Professor Muhammad Yunus.

The NBR in its appeal said Grameen Kalyan has filed the review petition with a declaration that the organisation will not lodge any appeal against the reassessment.

So, the HC has no authority to allow Grameen Kalyan to move an appeal against the reassessment order, Assistant Attorney General Tahmina Poly told The Daily Star, citing the NBR's appeal.

Attorney General AM Amin Uddin appeared for the NBR while Sarder Jinnat Ali argued for Grameen Kalyan during the hearing.

Woman gets death penalty for killing husband

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A Joypurhat court yesterday sentenced a woman and her accomplice to death for killing her husband over a domestic dispute in Khetlal upazila of Joypurhat.

The convicted are Jotsna Begum, 45, of the upazila's Durgapur village and her accomplice Bulu Mia, 50, of the upazila's Khanpara village.

Nurul Islam of Additional District and Sessions Judge's Court-1 handed down the verdict in the presence of the accused.

The court also fined each Tk 50,000.

Public Prosecutor Nripindranath Mondal said the Jotsna and her husband Jamirul Islam started to grow apart after she got involved in an extramarital affair with Bulu.

On November 9, 2015, the duo murdered Jamirul Islam in a planned way.

Following the incident, the victim's uncle Sanaul Islam filed a murder case with Khetlal Police Station.